

# Running Radio Selam

*Constraints facing an Ethiopian peace radio project*

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## Chapter one: Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the Study

The media are often accused of misrepresenting conflict and fomenting violence. Examples include vicious propaganda on both sides during World War II and the dehumanising messages of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines during the Rwanda genocide. There are the gung ho antics and damaging omissions of Anglophone media during the build-up to the second Iraq War, where weapons technologies were glorified on news shows and “embedded” journalists filed breathless stories of danger and action in the land of a faceless and dehumanised “enemy”, while often failing to question the conflict’s underlying rationale or examine alternatives to the violence. In 2003, for his part, famous former CBS news anchor Dan Rather joined in the combative rhetoric characterising quite a few members of the Western media when declaring, “I never tried to kid anybody that I’m some internationalist or something. And when my country is at war, I want my country to win” (Rather on Larry King Live, 2003 in Solomon, 2005: np). In a book on the first Iraq War (the Gulf War), former New York Times correspondent Christ Hedges argued that ‘the notion that the press was used in the war is incorrect. The press wanted to be used. It saw itself as part of the war effort’ (2002: 143).

While such criticisms are hardly correct for all western media, they do raise questions about the role of the media in conflict. Metzl claims that ‘every one of the major humanitarian crises and human rights conflicts around the world over the past century began with a propaganda phase, where extremists took control of the means of mass communication and used them to incite conflict’ (2000 in Thompson, 2002: 42). And if brave journalists take great risks to bring stories from dangerous war zones, there are accusations that the end results can sometimes be more polarizing than informative, more shock than substance, and more dehumanizing than humanizing.

Towards the end of the 1980s new forms of peace-oriented media quietly arrived on the scene, plying their trade in trouble spots around the world through mediums such as radio, television, newspapers, theatre, and billboards. Whether implicitly or

explicitly, these disparate groups of new media, often dubbed “peace media” by the organisations that run them, at the very least have in common that they want to prevent violent conflict and promote peace. This, of course, is easier said than done. Peace media initiatives are the subject of debate on a range of issues, and as they spread and become more ambitious, with one proponent claiming that ‘there is an emerging belief that the media may well be the most effective means of conflict resolution and preventing new wars’ (Howard, 2003: 2), the quest for answers is as important as ever.<sup>1</sup>

One avenue of research to be addressed deals with constraints on the organizational side of peace media projects, and in this thesis in specific I look at a peace *radio* project. There is some research on the impact (or lack thereof) of peace media programming on audiences, and even more on the impact of development media programming in general (see last footnote), but as far as I have been able to find, organizational research on constraints on the operation of peace radio projects is somewhat of a neglected area. This matters, because while organizations would ideally run peace radio projects based only on the optimal strategies for contributing to peace (whatever they may be), this does not always hold true for real life. Whether the organizations are local or international, African historical, political, social, cultural, and economic realities complicate an already complicated task. Although little systematic research has been conducted, many peace radio practitioners are reporting economic troubles, staffing and organizational challenges, regime and rebel harassment, and other constraints that hamper production and threaten the sustainability of projects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A less ambitious claim is made by Becker, who writes that ‘the media neither start wars, nor can they end them. Communicating media can however have an increasingly positive influence on processes of social communication and societal change’ (2004: 1). Much previous research has focused on the central issue of *audience impact*: do development (including peace) media work and in such case - in which circumstances? Unfortunately firm conclusions have been elusive. Morris’ (2005) review of “diffusion”, “participatory” and “hybrid” development media initiatives show that some studies report no effect while others do, and that the lack of common evaluation standards or methods is hampering progress. Becker writes that ‘media impact research is not only one of the most thoroughly researched special areas ... It is also that area in which there can be no reliable and unambiguous statements and findings. Above all, it is the area that must necessarily come to this or that conclusion, depending on the theoretical premises’ (2004: 8).

<sup>2</sup> Some of these reports are presented in the theory chapter.

Because of this, my thesis deals with the constraints facing Radio Selam, a peace radio programme run by an Ethiopian religious organisation that survived for one year, from 2007 to 2008, before terminating prematurely.

What challenges did the organization face in executing the project? In order to shine some light on these issues, I have opted for four hypothesized spheres of constraining influence that I arrived at by examining research on conventional media organizations, and reports on problems facing African peace radio projects. I look at obstacles linked to the organization that ran Radio Selam (the organizational sphere), to individuals most closely involved with the project (the individual sphere), as well as to funding (the economic sphere) and politics (the political sphere). In order to examine these four spheres, I carried out a literature review, fieldwork in Ethiopia in 2007 focused on one-to-one in-depth interviews, as well as interviews before and after the fieldwork in order to map the operation of the project and consequently the constraints facing that operation.

## **1.2 Aims of the thesis**

### *General aim:*

The general aim of the thesis is to investigate some major ways in which four overall forces (organizational, individual, economic and political) constrain the Radio Selam project.

### *Specific aims:*

1. To investigate constraints linked to the organizational backdrop to Radio Selam, with a particular focus on the organizational structure and processes in Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus from the leadership and down to the communicators and technical staff behind the radio programming.

2. To investigate constraints linked to the project performance of a number of individuals who work on Radio Selam, with a particular focus on educational backgrounds, skills, motivations and actions.
3. To investigate constraints linked to the sources, levels and roles of funding and resources for the Radio Selam project.
4. To investigate constraints linked to how the government interacts with the church and those working on the Radio Selam project. I also look at the influence of one rebel group that I believe may have an impact on the project.
5. To highlight any major strengths and positive aspects that reveal themselves during the study in order to make my thesis somewhat solution-oriented, and to examine whether the project faced any advantages and disadvantages related to the fact that it was managed by a religious organisation.

### **1.3 Research question and sub-questions**

As demonstrated above, I wish to look at a range of different issues. In order to locate independent variables relevant for studying the Radio Selam project, I conducted a preliminary study of research on conventional media organizations, as well as a study of reports detailing problems encountered by African peace radio projects (see theory chapter). Specifically, the thesis attempts to shed some light on how some influences from four overall forces that are often considered in media studies<sup>3</sup> constrain the Radio Selam project. These forces are the organisation itself (1), individuals working on the project (2), funding (3), and the political sphere (4).

My basic hypothesis can be phrased as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance McQuail (2005), Neveu (2004), Engwall (1978), Shoemaker and Reese (1996), Bantz, McCorkle and Baade (1981), Altheide (1976), White (1950), Hafez (2002), Cohen (1963), Weaver and Wilhoit (1986), Allan (1999), Pekurny (1982), and Schudson (2005).



***The organizational, individual, economic and political spheres all have the power to constrain the Radio Selam project in various ways.***

This is a very simple and general hypothesis, and it is the starting point for my study.

The main research question allows for an examination of each of the four selected spheres of hypothesized influence as separate variables, although they are assumed to interact in important ways at certain times. The research question further reflects the fact that qualitative research may be better at examining *whether* and *how* variables matter to outcomes than at assessing *how much* they matter given the complexity of social processes (George & Bennett, 2005: 25).

The research question can be stated as follows:

***What are some important ways in which the organizational, individual, economic and political spheres constrain Radio Selam?***

Refer to the aims as well as the methodology sub-chapter for more information on my approach and variables. In addition I wish to look at two further main issues:

Sub-question #1: *Does the Radio Selam project have any striking strengths and opportunities, and what are they?*

Sub-question #2: *Is it possible to generalize my findings to other cases?*

## **1.4 Limitations**

The thesis attempts to examine a complicated process with many variables. Due to limitations on time, resources and space the examination is necessarily somewhat superficial as well as most probably inadequate to the task of covering all possible variables. Here I present some limitations.

I look at four spheres of hypothesized constraining influences. Each of these spheres represents complex social processes with many potential variables. They may also interact in numerous ways. While I do attempt to provide an overview of many central processes, I have opted somewhat for breadth rather than depth. This is a conscious decision that I believe should enable me to present a better overview of the wide spectrum of often interacting influences on the project where these occur, as my impression from a review of the literature is that this is what is missing from organizational research on peace radio. As Bläsi notes regarding the production of peace journalism, which is one category of peace media:

To date almost all proposals concentrate on the change of only one influencing factor. ... This is unfortunate, because it can be assumed that no one factor is key to a more peace-oriented journalism, but that real and lasting change can only come about if all factors are tackled. ... It is certainly a sign of progress when increasing numbers of journalists begin to supplement their knowledge of conflict dynamics and learn strategies of constructive conflict coverage. However, one should not be surprised if the overall effects on conflict coverage remain limited due to the influence of other factors (2004: 7).

While Radio Selam does not include news programming (for reasons to be explained) and is thus a different category of peace media than peace journalism, I believe it is fair to say that Bläsi's point is also relevant for my study as I hope that it will provide a useful overview of a number of different and interrelated processes and challenges.

As noted I focus on the organizational processes that affect the project. I do not include a content analysis of the programmes as this goes beyond the focus on the process, and would require more time and money than I had at my disposal for transcripts and translations.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, I do present the intended programming as presented in Radio Selam's programme schedule, funding grant documents and interviews, and examples of modifications to programming as offered in interviews.

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<sup>4</sup> Readers that would like to hear the actual programmes can contact me for Oromo-language recordings of the first months of programming.

All in all I feel this gives a revealing, even if not complete, overview of programming outcomes.

I also do not focus on the reception side of the project. As pointed out in the first footnote, researchers are having difficulty measuring the impact of peace media on the behaviour of audiences. However, the question of whether or not peace media projects actually work, achieving some or all of their goals, is beyond the scope of this study of the organizational process.

One major potential influence on Radio Selam that is not dealt with at all is the community, including listeners, family members of the project staff and other social groupings. I hypothesize that this is an important sphere of influence, and this is borne out by some media research.<sup>5</sup> Although I would have liked to include this sphere, I had to limit the study at some point both to save time and to avoid cramming irresponsibly much into a finite number of pages, which would have forced me to abandon a detailed examination of the four spheres I did choose to focus on. However, I do touch lightly on community issues particularly as a by-product of examining the influence of ethnic and religious identification on the project.

Finally, there is a heated debate particularly among those focusing on Peace Journalism (which as noted is a closely related category of Peace Media to that in this study but which focuses mostly on news production) over whether or not it is suitable for journalists to engage in reporting that is engineered to be biased in favour of a particular cause such as peace.<sup>6</sup> However, this discussion is also beyond the scope of this thesis.

## **1.5 Defining peace media**

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance Shoemaker and Reese (1996), McQuail (2005), Weaver and Wilhoit (1986), Hunt (2006) and SFCG (nd) for some basic introductions.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Loyn (2007) for a defence of the ideal of objectivity, Lynch (2007) for a defence of Peace Journalism, and Ross (2007) for a summary of some the debates up to that point and a call for a search for commonalities and cooperation between the different camps.

It is difficult to neatly define peace media. It may be that

The theme [of peace media] is too fresh, too plastic. Practitioners are still defining its shape and form. Simply stated, it has not yet congealed to the point where analysts can get to work. Another reason may be the subject's nature, somewhat inchoate and contingent, defying simple categorization (Price & Thompson, 2002: 3).

An illustration of this 'inchoate and contingent' (ibid.) state of affairs is Howard's lengthy definition of a 'pro-active media based [peace] intervention':

[It is] the product of an outside intervener such as a peacekeeping force or a nongovernmental organisation and is often deployed in a conflict or post-conflict environment. It can be media intended to counter hate propaganda, or programming to provide immediately practical information such as election and voting practices, refugee reunification, education or health advice. [It is] specifically intent upon transforming attitudes, promoting reconciliation and reducing conflict. It is not conventional journalism... The content is determined by its appropriateness to fostering peace. The programming and delivery mechanisms can be innovative adaptations of popular culture such as radio and television soap operas and dramas, street theatre, wall posters, and more (2003: np).

As this definition demonstrates, development issues such a health advice or climate adaptation can also be part of peace media projects. Such development programming is of course not unique to peace media and peace radio, but I do feel it is defensible to categorise it as a *potential* variant of peace radio programming. According to a study commissioned by the World Bank, ' [civil] war retards development, but conversely, development retards war. [...] Where development succeeds, countries become progressively safer from violent conflict' (Collier et al, 2003: 1). Furthermore, a study by US researchers writing in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences concludes that African conflicts are 50 percent more likely in warm years, and that increased warming in the future due to climate change is likely to exacerbate the problem (Burke et al, 2009).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I do not judge the validity of the assertions in these reports, or make any assertions about the efficacy of peace radio for solving development issues, but the claims themselves as well as the heavy use of development-related programming on many peace radio stations prompts me to include it as a category of peace programming.

However, even Howard's definition does not seem comprehensive enough. For instance, the religious organisation (RO) behind the peace radio project I examine as a case study in this thesis is not an outside intervener or a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the usual sense, and the proponents of some forms of peace media content (particularly "strict" conventional journalism, and perhaps "peace journalism") sometimes argue that their programming and its alleged impact is merely a product of conventional journalism rigorously executed.

While the scope is narrowed to a RO peace radio project for this thesis, others also run peace radio projects – such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs), individuals, and organisations that are state-controlled to a larger or lesser degree such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service Trust or Voice of America (VOA). Furthermore, peace media initiatives are often part of larger peace interventions by the organisations concerned, and may, in addition to promoting peace directly, want to support the operation of those interventions and benefit from synergy effects.

## **1.6 Why radio?**

Why not study newspapers or television, street theatre or music festivals? My choice of radio is based on the belief that this is the medium with the largest potential for reaching large Ethiopian and other African populations, and particularly the remote rural populations where many conflicts take place.

A sub-Saharan 18-country survey by BBC World Service Trust in 2006 concluded that 'radio is the most accessible and the most consumed media in all of the countries' (AMDI #1, 2006: 26). The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations writes that radio 'is still the most popular, the most economic and the most accessible means of communication for rural [African] populations. In Africa, the number of radio sets per head is superior by far to the number of TV sets or telephone lines' (FAO, 2006: 18). Francis Rolt of the NGO Search for Common Ground comments that

radios are ‘small, cheap, and easily transportable – people fleeing conflicts often take their radios with them’ (2005: 181).

Radio is also important in Ethiopia. Getahun writes that ‘in a poor country like Ethiopia, where there is a rugged topography, high rate of illiteracy, poor infrastructure and transport network, radio is the most important means of mass communication’ (2006: 13). Desalegn notes that, ‘by far the most important media in terms of its reach and impact is radio but due to poverty, and inadequate marketing and transport facilities, only a small percentage of the population listens to radio broadcasts, especially in the countryside’ (2004: 5). Desalegn’s numbers were based on the 1994 Ethiopian census and are therefore somewhat outdated, even though the urban-rural divide still exists, as does a male-female divide. In 2005 more than 40 percent of Ethiopian women and more than 62 percent of men in cities reportedly listened to the radio at least once a week, as opposed to more than 10 percent of rural women and more than 25 percent of rural men (CSA, 2006: 28-37). About half the population possesses a radio set, while ‘far fewer’ possess a television, and the state run radio and television services cover an estimated 75 percent and 45 percent of the country respectively (Skjerdal, 2009: 334). Among ‘light’, ‘medium’ and ‘heavy’ listener groups in sub-Saharan countries, this classifies as ‘light’ according to the BBC survey (AMDI #1, 2006: 26). Nevertheless there are far more radio listeners than TV-viewers or newspaper readers. A spokeswoman for the American NGO that sponsored the radio project I examine here told me that they have “always been very, very interested in radio, because it’s such an effective way of reaching large populations in Africa – it’s really the only effective way ... I think” (Bruton telephone interview, 2007). In the recent literature on African and Ethiopian media I have not been able to locate newer figures on radio usage than those noted here (see for instance Skjerdal, 2009: 334).

It was during the genocide in Rwanda that “hate radio” shot to infamy, with the journalists on Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) and Radio Rwanda urging Hutu civilians and militia to support the Army and Special Forces in killing

their Tutsi and moderate Hutu neighbours. As the Rwanda expert Alison Des Forges noted in her detailed account of the genocide, *Leave None to Tell the Story*:

Throughout the genocide, Radio Rwanda and RTLM continued to broadcast both incitations to slaughter and the directions on how to carry it out. Authorities knew that they could reach a far wider audience through the radio than through popular meetings and so told people that they should listen to the radio to know what was expected of them. The burgomaster of Bwakira commune, for example, reminded people that they “have to follow all orders transmitted in meetings or on the radio”. [...] On April 12, the same day when Karamira and the Ministry of Defence used the radio to make clear that Tutsi were the target of killing, Prefect Renzaho used Radio Rwanda to give detailed instructions about where to look for them:

[We] ask that people do patrols [amarondo], as they are used to doing, in their neighborhoods. They must close ranks, remember how to use their usual tools and defend themselves. [...] I would also ask that each neighbourhood try to organize itself to do communal work [umuganda] to clear the brush, to search houses, beginning with those that are abandoned, to search the marshes of the area to be sure that no inyenzi [cockroaches] have slipped in to hide themselves there [...] [So] they should cut this brush, search the drains and ditches [,] [...] put up barriers and guard them, choosing reliable people to do this, who have what they need [...] so that nothing can escape them (Des Forges, 1999: np).

Yet despite the potential for abuses that radio broadcasting presents, Africa has also seen a proliferation of peace radio projects run mostly by NGOs, ROs and the United Nations (UN). The Rwandan genocide, in particular, was the driving force behind several ambitious new peace radio projects that sought to counter the deadly propaganda and promote peace and reconciliation. Today projects are springing up all over the continent. I noticed this trend while conducting an informal review of Africa peace radio production constraints (some of the findings are detailed in the media production chapter), and UNESCO’s media support programme (the International Programme for the Development of Communication, or IPDC), hints at it when commenting that in the two years leading up to 2009 it ‘has responded to emerging media development priorities in the region, such as conflict-sensitive reporting and the coverage of climate change issues’ (UNESCO, 2009: np).

## 1.7 Why a religious organisation?

While scouting around for a viable peace radio project for my case study, it was not my initial intention to focus on a station or programme run by a religious organisation (RO). However, as I became more familiar with the breadth of different projects by various actors in Africa, I came to realise that far from being a mere oddity or footnote in peace radio work, or simply a source of complicating variables limiting the potential for generalizing my research, here were a number of exiting projects riding on a mushrooming wave of church engagement in conflict resolution across countries and continents. There are even suggestions that ROs may have some particular advantages in peace building in certain situations (see below). When I was made aware of a peace radio project run by a RO in Ethiopia, a country that seemed like a promising focus of study given a number of domestic factors,<sup>8</sup> I therefore did not hesitate to commence my study once I had convinced myself that this was a suitable project that could yield important information.

Many contemporary conflicts are *identity-based*, arising from groups' 'concern over their survival, access to resources, and influence in divided societies. Such identity-based conflicts, often entailing ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects, have been among the most persistent, intractable, and destabilizing for the regions in which they occur' (Pearson, 2001: 282). Douglas M. Johnston (2005), President of International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, wants a greater role for RO initiatives in such conflicts:

Clearly, a broader perspective is needed, one that acknowledges that matters of faith can play a central role in conflict, that identity is not determined by lines on a map but by emotional bonds of culture and blood, and that passions of the heart and soul are every bit as important as traditional considerations of political power, resources, and diplomatic protocols when dealing with identity-based conflicts (2005: 209).

Johnston (2005) lists a series of strengths that he argues are inherent to RO initiatives. Firstly, the long-term presence of many ROs means that they may at times have

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<sup>8</sup> See methodology.



stronger credibility than other peace actors (Johnston, 2005: 212-213). Secondly, ROs need to avoid using peace initiatives as an opportunity for evangelisation as that will undermine their credibility, but deliberate highlighting of the peaceful basis of religions can be beneficial (Johnston, 2005: 213). Thirdly, where ROs are third-party mediators they can ‘capitalize on religious beliefs and symbols in finding a common religious language’, and they can also use their potential moral authority to influence belligerent positions (ibid.). Finally, as ‘religious networks are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world today,’ they have unprecedented reach from the grassroots to the national and international levels (Johnston, 2005: 214).

International ROs and gatherings such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, World Conference of Religions for Peace, and SIGNIS - World Catholic Association for Communication, are accumulating ever more experience in the field of peace work. For instance, CRS’ Peacebuilding Program, founded in 2001, aims to ‘build a culture of peace throughout the world based on a foundation of justice and reconciliation’<sup>9</sup> (CRS #1, 2007: np). In addition to their own projects, CRS works with or supports local partners around the world, including in the field of peace radio (CRS, 1998; CRS, 2004).

CRS’ shift towards peace work had its genesis in Rwanda, evolving ‘naturally from an enhanced understanding of its own role in the community that it was serving, following the genocide of 1994’ (Johnston, 2005: 215). This recognition of roles vis-à-vis communities has been the motivation for some other ROs too, ‘gravitating to peacebuilding as a natural extension of their work in relief and development. A holistic view of development work encompasses peace, justice, and security as integral components, and peacebuilding thus becomes an extension of the traditional emphasis’ (ibid.).

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<sup>9</sup> CRS’ activities provide an interesting insight into how wide-ranging some RO peace initiatives have become. According to their website, Peacebuilding Program activities are education, training and workshops, prevention and early warning systems, women and peace building, security and peacebuilding, inter-religious dialogue, institutions/peace and justice commissions, business and micro-enterprise development, media and communications, development and reconstruction, advocacy and citizen diplomacy, higher level diplomacy, research, intervention roles, trauma healing and psychosocial work, demobilization, and emergency response and post-conflict reconstruction.

Another important development for ROs has been the explosion in means of communication. All over Africa Muslims, Christians, and those of other faiths are going on air, on tape, in print and online<sup>10</sup>. In some sub-Saharan countries 'religious media may be the primary or sole area of non-state-sector media development since 2000' (AMDI #1, 2006: 31). For instance, according to a BBC survey three of the most popular radio stations in Kenya were religious in 2006, one third of television broadcasters in Uganda were ROs, and in South Africa a RO radio station was one of only two national broadcasters, the other belonging to the public broadcasting organisation (ibid.).

There also appear to be a rising number of examples of RO radio stations that attempt to promote peace and dialogue in countries such as Tanzania, Liberia, Sudan and Uganda.<sup>11</sup> Many deal with brutal insurgencies, civil wars and the effects of these. As with the NGO peace projects, they tackle everything from the resultant health and refugee challenges to the conflicts themselves and reconciliation.

Of course, far from all religious communication initiatives focus on conflict, and some that do are inflammatory<sup>12</sup>, but a sign of the times may be the World Association for Christian Communication's October 2008 congress. Titled "Communication is Peace", it focused on communication rights, media and gender justice, 'power, conflict and peace: telling the story', as well as New Communication and Information Technologies (NCITs) and peace (WACC, 2007: np). Furthermore, 'SIGNIS delegates, during their meeting in Cape Town in 2003, choose as the main objective for SIGNIS to work to promote a Culture of Peace through the media' (SIGNIS, 2007: np), including establishing a network of "peace correspondents" ... who search for, and report on, events and activities that contribute to a culture of peace' (SIGNIS, 2004: np).

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance Hackett (2003) or Schulz (2003).

<sup>11</sup> For Tanzania, see for instance JRS (2001) for information on Radio Kwizera. For Liberia, see for instance Lefevere (2007) for information on Radio Veritas. For Sudan, see for instance SIGNIS (2007) for information on Radio Bakhita. For Uganda, see for instance BBC (2004) for information on Radio Wa.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Hackett (2003), or Michaud (2007).

The first full-fledged Christian radio stations began broadcasting in 1931. That year the Roman Catholic station Radio Vaticana began broadcasting from the Vatican, followed by the Evangelical “Voice of the Andes” (HCJB) in Ecuador. From the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a sharp increase in both Christian and Muslim stations. By the early 1980s there were estimated to be 200 Catholic radio stations operating outside the US, and more than 1000 evangelical stations (Lundgren, 1983: 28). However, a review of RO peace radio projects that I have conducted indicates that most may be Catholic. Although there are peace media projects by other religious denominations (the case study focuses on a Protestant RO), it may be that the long history of Latin American Catholic radio activism has resulted in a “head start”:

From the first community radio station ever, *Radio Sutatenza* (1947), to the thousands that operate today mainly in Latin America, radio has been the most supportive medium of communities struggling for a better world. The Catholic priests behind these communication projects quickly understood that the survival and development of the radio stations had to be linked to community participation, involving the real social, political and cultural needs of the people, and not just to preaching about faith or against communism (Gumucio Dagron, 2001: 15).

## **1.8 Why constraints?**

I have decided to focus especially on constraints as many peace radio projects in Africa suffer from a long range of serious obstacles that threaten their very survival. If the organizational processes behind peace radio projects and the constraints that them have not been properly described, it is more difficult to put in place effective strategies to reduce the challenges, hampering the ability to satisfactorily explore the hoped-for potential of peace radio in areas suffering from violent conflict. While this thesis cannot possibly cover all the possible processes and constraints faced by different types of peace radio projects in different countries and different organisations, or even at Radio Selam, I hope to highlight some issues that should be considered before embarking on such initiatives.

My hope is that this research can also serve as a somewhat solution-oriented contribution to the literature on peace radio. Most importantly, it is necessary to understand the processes and challenges in order to find solutions to the obstacles. In addition, some positive aspects of the project will also be described.

## **1.9 Thesis structure**

**Chapter one** introduced the research, the research hypothesis, the research question, the research sub-questions and the research aims. I set out some limitations of my study, defined peace media, and explained why I look at radio, a religious organisation, and constraints.

**Chapter two** looks at the research methodology. The methodological considerations taken in constructing the research programme, the variables and the strategies employed in case study interviewing are described with some examples.

**Chapter three** presents a short and selective overview of some research on conventional Western media organizations. The chapter also presents my findings from a review of reports on constraints facing African peace radio projects.

**Chapter four** first introduces the reader to Ethiopia. It includes a brief history, and information on Ethiopian politics, ethnic identities, conflict and the media. The chapter then presents the data gathered during the case study of Radio Selam.

**Chapter five** summarises the findings and concludes based on the findings. The chapter also looks at some positive aspects of the project, and considers the possibility for generalizing to other cases.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology employed for the case study. I begin by introducing qualitative research, before justifying my approach to the research and case selection, and finally the interview methods.

The study essentially takes the form of an institutional analysis using the qualitative research method to look at how Radio Selam production is constrained by forces internal and external to Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). In addition to the case study of Radio Selam, I include a short theory chapter on media institutions and production research. However, as peace radio production is a little researched field, and religious peace radio even less so, the thesis is primarily descriptive and attempts to introduce readers to the processes at work. I attempt to build tentative theory, and to look at possibilities for generalizing to other cases.

The study is a plausibility probe. Plausibility probes are ‘preliminary studies on relatively untested theories and hypotheses’ (George & Bennett, 2005: 75). The frequent lack of clarity and internal consistency in such theories and hypotheses means that ‘the priority is not to test [them], but to refine them if possible so that they can be tested’, the refining taking place by the use of case studies (George & Bennett, 2005: 182).

## **2.2 Qualitative research**

This is a qualitative study, and Maxwell points out that ‘qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations, and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations’ as quantitative researchers do (2005: 22).

Maxwell (2005: 22-23) argues that this means that the qualitative method is useful for achieving five different intellectual goals, of which four are relevant here. Qualitative research is good at understanding the particular *context* within which participants act, and the influence of this context on their actions. This is important for me as I am looking at the impact of various contexts on Radio Selam. Qualitative research is also better at identifying *unanticipated phenomena and influences* than quantitative research as the qualitative approach focuses on particulars and details, and because the

research plan can be altered more underway than in statistical studies. Furthermore, the qualitative method is more useful for understanding *processes* in addition to outcomes, while quantitative studies have a heavier emphasis on outcomes. As noted my study focuses on processes constraining Radio Selam. Finally, qualitative research is useful for developing *causal explanations*, especially when it comes to determining the causal chain behind specific outcomes, which is vital if I am to properly explain how the influences on Radio Selam progress to their destination.

Furthermore, Maxwell argues that achieving the intellectual goals above facilitates the achievement of some practical goals. Two are particularly relevant here. Firstly, qualitative research can generate results and theories which emphasize the perspective of the study participants and understand local settings, and which can thus be more understandable and credible to those being studied. This increases chances that people connected to the field under study will take the results seriously and implement its lessons. Secondly, and in a related vein, qualitative research is useful for ‘conducting formative evaluations, ones that are intended to help improve existing practice rather than to simply assess the value of the program or product being evaluated’ (Maxwell, 2005: 24). Both these points are important to me, as I hope that this study will be taken seriously by peace radio practitioners and funders in general and the church behind Radio Selam in specific, and potentially be of some practical use in designing and implementing future projects.

I also wish to highlight two challenges noted by Maxwell challenges related to the *validity* of my qualitative study of Radio Selam. The first is researcher “bias”, which refers to ‘the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory or preconceptions and the selection of data that “stand out” to the researcher’ due to subjective factors (Maxwell, 2005: 108). As it is impossible to eliminate personal bias in qualitative research (ibid.), I will only try to reduce the results of bias by being aware of it, and by appropriate methodological approaches to the study and interviewing. In later parts of this chapter I show how I prepared for research and designed it to be open to information that conflicted with my subjective beliefs. The

second issue is "reactivity", which refers to 'the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied', which is a particular problem with qualitative interviewing such as that conducted for my study (Maxwell, 2005: 108-109). The interviewees will always be influenced by me and my questions when answering, so the best I can do is try to minimize this threat by things such as avoiding leading questions and by generally taking care (ibid.).

In addition there is the challenge of designing my study so that it is generalizable to other cases if desired (Maxwell, 2005: 115-116). While it is not possible, with qualitative research, to provide precise extrapolations to other cases as is common with quantitative research; it is still possible to lend plausibility to claims that qualitative cases are generalizable. First, there is "face generalizability", which means that 'there is no reason *not* to believe that the results apply more generally' (original emphasis) (Maxwell, 2005: 115). Second, the generalizability of qualitative studies is usually based on the development of a theory that can be extended to other cases, as I make a tentative attempt at in the conclusions chapter. Third, there are a number of other features that can support generalizability of qualitative research, including 'the similarity of dynamics and constraints to other situations, the presumed depth or universality of the phenomenon, and corroboration from other studies' (Maxwell, 2005: 116). I discuss this issue in the conclusions chapter.

## **2.3 Research design**

In this subchapter I discuss the selection of a case, the selection of variables, the variable definitions, the literature review and interviews.

### **2.3.1 Case selection**

According to George and Bennett cases should not be selected 'simply because they are interesting, important, or easily researched using readily available data' (2005: 83). Cases rather need to be 'relevant to the research objective of the study' (ibid.). Radio Selam appears to be relevant as it is a peace radio project in an African country with



strong potential challenges relating to all four proposed spheres of influence. Ethiopia has a documented history of political interference in media matters (see for instance Desalegn, 2004; Styán, 1999; Benequista, 2007; US SD, 2009). It is a low-income country, rendering many organisations and individuals economically vulnerable. There are violent conflicts that may have implications for several spheres of influence, such as individual level self-identification, or government behaviour towards media coverage. I further believe that Ethiopia is as good a place as any, among African countries facing conflict, for focusing on organizational processes. For detecting potential problems relating to issues such as ethnic antagonisms or government interference, it may even be better than some other African countries with arguably more “modern” societies.

### **2.3.2 Variable selection and definitions**

As recommended by George and Bennett (2005: 84-85) the hypothesised independent variables for this study has been arrived at by an iterative procedure based on readings of literature examining historical cases. The literature covered conventional media organizations as well as peace radio project constraints in Africa.

The independent variables are presumed to be the political (defined as the government and one specific rebel group my literature review indicates is particularly relevant), economic (funding), organisational (church), and individual (project-affiliated individuals) spheres.

Variance in the independent variables is represented by their non-interference, neutral/positive interference, and constraining interference in the Radio Selam project.

The dependent variable is the Radio Selam project, defined as the project processes and outcomes on the production side, including but not limited to issues such as project planning, securing funding, project initiation, the technical and editorial production process behind individual Radio Selam programmes, programming, and

project sustainability. Variance in this variable relates to the functioning and relative health of the processes and outcomes.

### **2.3.3 Literature review and interviews**

The material collected is the result of a literature review of secondary sources, and of one-to-one interviews I conducted with people close to the project.

During the literature review I read up on methodology and media production, on Ethiopia and EECMY's background, and I obtained documents such as Radio Selam's programme schedule, the strategic plan of EECMY's Peace Office, and the grant documents from an organisation providing external funding for Radio Selam. My stay in Ethiopia and interviews were very helpful in regard to the latter documents, none of which had been published outside of EECMY or the external sponsor.

The literature review complements my interviews, and allowed me to crosscheck some claims made by the interviewees. However, there are some limitations. In particular, there is quite little literature available that deals with peace radio production, and even less dealing with radio production at EECMY. There is particularly little literature dealing with Radio Selam, and I believe I am the first to examine this project academically.

My approach to interviewing is founded upon "sociological naturalism", which holds that the goal is to uncover reality as it appears for interviewees (Ryen, 2002: 236). In this view a relatively stable perception of reality exists with each interviewee, and the challenge becomes to extract it as data (ibid.).

For Rubin and Rubin the purpose of qualitative interviewing is theory building, and

qualitative interviewers build theories quite differently from positivists. In a positivist's approach to research, an existing academic theory guides the design for data collection; once the data are collected, they are used to test and perhaps modify the original theory. By contrast, qualitative researchers build theory step

by step from the examples and experiences collected during the interviews (1995: 56).

I nevertheless allowed theories from conventional media production research to partially guide the design for data collection, as I needed help in locating suitable initial variables for the research. The intention was to allow the information obtained to guide the focus and design of questions. Furthermore the flexible, iterative and continuous research design described below allowed the assumptions derived from the partial reliance on earlier research findings to be examined during the fieldwork. The reports examined in the theory chapter are also useful for making some tentative assumptions about the potential for generalizing my findings.

Most interviews were conducted during my stay in Addis Ababa from late July to late September 2007, while two were conducted in (face-to-face) or from (per telephone) Oslo in May and November 2007, and two (e-mail correspondence) were conducted from Oslo in 2009. I interviewed a total of thirteen persons, and in the thesis I use information gathered from twelve of these. Two of the interviewees were interviewed twice (making for a total of fifteen interview situations including the e-mail correspondence). Two of the sixteen interviews were conducted per telephone, the two in 2009 by e-mail, while the rest were conducted face-to-face. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to four hours, averaging two to three hours.

An overview of the interviewees can be found after the bibliography, including interview dates and method of interview, and the profiles of some are introduced more in-depth in the case study chapter. The interviewees include people formerly involved with peace and media work at EECMY, people working in EECMY's Peace Office and the church's media production department, and one representative for the external sponsor of Radio Selam programme production.

One of the twelve interviewees is presented anonymously as the person did not wish to go public with the sensitive details provided to me due to implications for the interviewees' relations with the church and church staff.

The methodology behind my interviews draws heavily from Rubin and Rubin's (1995) lengthy guide to qualitative interviewing. However, their guide presumes large research projects with large numbers of available interviewees and the resources to conduct comparative research. Comparative research is beyond the scope of this study, while there are a limited number of interviewees. Because of this Rubin and Rubin's advice has been followed wherever possible while keeping in mind the limitations. For an understanding of the interview techniques I employed, such as the structure of questions, strategies for following up on leads, and ways of discovering slant and bias, refer to Rubin and Rubin (1995). Here I content myself with briefly describing my interview design, the type of interview approach, interviewee selection, and challenges with cross-cultural interviews (an issue not discussed by Rubin and Rubin).

My interview design was 'flexible, iterative, and continuous' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 43; original emphasis). It was continuous as I constantly redesigned questions throughout the project in order to explore 'new topics while keeping the research organized and focused' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 48). For instance, when I discovered that Radio Selam had to be broadcast into the country from South Africa even though it was produced in Ethiopia, I prepared questions to explore this further within the larger framework of constraints by the four spheres of influence. My design was flexible as the interviews were designed in such a way that they solicited ideas and themes from the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The themes were examined and were gradually winnowed down to those deemed most relevant following my personal judgement and further interviews. This was intended to reduce contamination by my preconceptions and allow for hidden variables and processes. Flexibility also allowed for the tailoring of questions for different interviewees according to their areas of specialisation or interest. Broadcasting from South Africa is also a good example here, as this was a theme that I did not expect at all and which only became apparent when I solicited ideas about technical challenges to production, and after further exploration I concluded that this was in fact an important constraint originating with the

government. Related to this, the design was iterative as new information uncovered by the flexible interviews helped develop my understanding of the issues (ibid.).

There are various possible approaches to interviewing, and I employed the “topical interview” as it explores the what, when, how and why of events and is well suited to creating a coherent narrative based on a series of in-depth interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 234). In general, topical interviewing is about ascertaining facts as ‘the researcher checks out details, tries to resolve contradictions, and ascertains how interviewees know what they claim to know’, while designing questions in such a way that the versions of events provided by interviewees can be integrated (ibid.).

Background research was carried out prior to the interviews based on the literature review of Ethiopia and EECMY, and on preliminary interviews with people that could give an overview of the issues, including a former member of the church’s Peace Office who happened to be in Norway shortly prior to my departure for Ethiopia, and a former member of the Peace Office in Addis Ababa with a deep insight into church processes and the background to Radio Selam. Coupled with my prior familiarity with Ethiopia (discussed below), it enabled the formulation of better-informed questions eliciting specific and detailed information, whilst demonstrating preparedness and thus hopefully reducing attempts by interviewees to present idealized, normative or otherwise distorted accounts. It also aided in the identification of relevant interviewees.

The interviewees were all busy professionals with hectic schedules, and thus many interviews were tailored so that the most essential questions, usually those that might only be answerable by one or two people, were posed early on in the interview. However, as many of these questions were very sensitive they were preceded by at least a few relatively innocuous questions focusing on technical detail. Almost all the interview began with questions covering the spelling of the interviewee’s name, the person’s professional position, the person’s professional and educational background, and current or former professional tasks in relation to EECMY. These questions also

helped to highlight the power relations and competencies of individuals, contributed to later analyses of possible slant and bias, and set a precedent for detailed answers.

The interviewee selection process must involve a matching of interviewees with the subject of research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 65). They 'should be knowledgeable about the cultural arena or the situation or experience being studied; they should be willing to talk; and when people in the arena have different perspectives, the interviewees should represent the range of points of view' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 66). The interviewees for this case study are all connected in some way with the peace radio programme and should have knowledge regarding different aspects of it. They were all willing to talk (in some cases after some initial coaxing). Different points of view were investigated by interviewing one representative for the external sponsor of Radio Selam's programme production, seven persons representing different departments in EECMY, three former employees of EECMY's Peace Office, and one anonymous Ethiopian interviewee. The in-depth interviews with EECMY employees in different departments served to furnish a range of views on various issues that I compared with the answers of other EECMY interviewees and non-EECMY interviewees. I felt that the interviews with people outside the organisation were particularly useful for comparing answers to the most sensitive issues, as these interviewees were sometimes more willing to discuss such issues and to discuss them in-depth, as was the anonymous interviewee.

The first interviews were conducted with individuals who were intimately familiar with the area being studied and who were willing to share their knowledge with me (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 66). These were two interviewees that had been long-ranking employees at EECMY and were central to the initiation of the Radio Selam project. The subsequent interviewees were identified by specific recommendation, by the incidental mention of individuals during interviews, as well as by asking interviewees to put names and background to the hierarchy of positions described in the Peace Office's strategic plan document. In this way the interviews have been conducted 'along a social network' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 68).

In selecting further interviewees I tried to ensure that a diversity of views was represented. This can be done by identifying ‘distinguishing characteristics of people in the cultural arena’ such as for instance age, gender, position, or ethnicity (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 69) or religion. For my case study interviewees were selected based on their former or current positions. Selection based on position allowed the exploration of issues relating to vertical and horizontal organisational interaction with top-, mid-, and low-level employees, as well as a representative for the external sponsor of production and transmission, and made it possible to tailor interviews for each interviewee’s particular area of responsibility. Furthermore, different age groups were represented by virtue of the number of interviews conducted. As regards gender, due to the male dominated nature of EECMY in Addis Ababa only one female Ethiopian was interviewed, as well as a female American representative for the external sponsor. As for “ethnic” diversity, I interviewed two members of the Amhara community, seven members of the Oromo community, a person identifying himself simply as Eritrean, and two Americans.

## **Chapter Three: Media Theory**

### **3.1 Introduction**

As I have not been able to locate rigorous academic research dealing with peace media organizations (except as regards programme impact research), this chapter gives a brief overview of select findings from academic research dealing with conventional Western media organizations, in order to give an idea of some standard issues related to these which I believe have much, although clearly not everything, in common with

peace media organizations. While there is a wide body of research dealing with media organizations, I only include some of the findings that I judged to be relevant to my case.

In addition, I present a summary of findings from a review of literature on African peace radio projects that I conducted that looked at constraints facing religious organisations (ROs), NGOs and the UN. I drew from a number of project and media reports, and some limited empirically derived academic literature. I conducted this review as I as noted could not locate any previous vigorous or broad research of this kind, and thus I believe that my findings contribute to an improved understanding of how my four selected spheres of hypothesized influence can negatively affect African peace radio projects – even if to varying degrees depending on issues such as the country in question, organization types and general context.

## **3.2 Conventional news media production constraints**

I begin by presenting findings from my review of organizational research literature.

### **3.2.1 Organizational sphere**

Organizations are responsible for hiring, firing, promoting and paying employees. Individual news organizations can generally be divided into three main sections - management, media professionals and technical staff – that conflict or interact in other ways (Engwall, 1978). These again are subject to external social and political pressures (legal/political control, pressure groups, other social institutions), economic pressures (competitors, news/information agencies, advertisers, owners, unions), audience demands and, finally, events and a constant information and culture supply (ibid.).

Although there is much circumstantial evidence regarding the influence of owners on market media organizations, there are also conventions protecting editors against pressure on some news stories (McQuail, 2005: 291). However, owners may well also



be behind the broad policies of the organizations which editors should follow, and may exert direct or indirect pressure in some cases (ibid.).

Media organizations have routines designed to make operations more efficient as the organizations 'can be described much like any other business that strives to find a market for its product. Media must obtain and process "raw product" (news, comedy), usually obtained from "suppliers" (officials, playwrights) outside the organisation, then deliver it to "consumers" (readers, viewers, and listeners)' (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 88). If these stages are considered as creating the need for media routines, then it becomes necessary for organizations to use routines that will produce media content that is acceptable to consumers, possible to process, and available from the suppliers (ibid.).

McQuail reminds us that organisational theory often distinguishes between utilitarian and normative organisational goals, where the former revolves around producing goods or services for profit, and the latter around advancing 'value or achieving a valued condition, based on the voluntary commitment of its participants' (2005: 283). While commercial media in this view have profit as a first motive and normative ends as a second, 'some media are run primarily for 'idealistic' social or cultural purposes, without seeking profit' (ibid.).

### **3.2.2 Individual sphere**

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) investigated how individual journalists might influence programming content by examining a series of personal characteristics. These were the personal attitudes, values, and beliefs that the journalists held due to characteristics such as gender and ethnicity, and their personal and professional backgrounds (for instance political attitudes or religious beliefs). They also examined the professional orientations and role conceptions held by the journalists 'at least partly' due to workplace socialisation (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 54). The journalists' characteristics and personal backgrounds and experiences created personal attitudes,

values, and beliefs that influenced their choice of workplace. Because of this, 'journalists and others tend, where possible, to work for organizations with compatible values' (McQuail, 2005: 301). Meanwhile, the workplace influenced professional orientations and role conceptions. While the personal attitudes, values, and beliefs only directly affected media content when the journalists held enough power to override organisational constraints, professional orientations and role conceptions had a direct effect (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 54-55).

### **3.2.3 Economic sphere**

Ownership of media organisations is highly relevant economically speaking, although 'it is not just ownership that counts, it is a wider question of who actually pays for the media product' (McQuail, 2005: 227). Payment or non-payment might come from the organisation's owners, but also from outside investors such as governments, public or private subsidy givers, advertisers and consumers. According to McQuail most media belong to one of three categories of ownership: commercial companies, the public sector and private non-profit bodies. The private non-profit bodies include 'bodies with a special cultural or social task such as political parties [and] churches' (McQuail, 2005: 227).

One defining feature of media cost structures is the potential imbalance between 'fixed' and 'variable' costs, where fixed costs can be land, physical premises, equipment and distribution networks, and variable costs can be materials, labour and 'software'. The higher the fixed costs in comparison with the variable costs, the more vulnerable the media organisation is to fluctuations in income, and indeed many media organisations have much higher fixed costs (McQuail, 2005: 225). For instance, in the case of radio the costs of broadcasting a programme one day, involving variable cost, will be considerably lower than the fixed cost of purchasing the radio premises, studios and transmission equipment.

### **3.2.4 Political sphere**

Laws and regulations are one major source of influence emanating from the political sphere. According to McQuail, the purposes of such laws and regulations in relation to the media include:

- the protection of the essential interests of the state and of public order, including the prevention of public harm;
- the safeguarding of individual rights and interests;
- meeting the needs of media industry for a stable and supportive operating environment;
- promotion of freedom and other communication and cultural values;
- encouragement of technological innovation and economic enterprise;
- setting technical and infrastructural standards;
- meeting international obligations, including observance of human rights;
- encouraging media accountability (2005: 234).

However, Neveu (2004) presents a more sceptical view of political influences that examines repertoires of tools and strategies that states can use to control the media overtly or covertly, including, among other things, issues such as government propaganda, potentially repressive laws and legal clauses allowing for the suspension of laws, as well as threats, surveillance, violence and even murder.

### **3.3 African peace radio project constraints**

I now present findings from reports on constraints on African peace radio projects, although I could not find information on each hypothesized sphere for every project. As I found quite a large number of reports on some sphere influences, many of which are very short, the sources I present in brackets are sometimes only those that are most central or that illustrate my points best.

I looked at peace radio projects run by NGOs, religious organisations (ROs), and the UN. The NGO projects were the radio stations MEGA FM in Uganda, Radio Agatashya first in Rwanda and then Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), STAR Radio in Liberia and Radio Maendeleo in DRC, as well as the production studios Studio Ijambo in Burundi and Talking Drum Studios in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The

RO projects were the radio stations Radio Kwizera in Tanzania, Radio Veritas in Liberia, and Radio Wa, Kyoga Veritas FM and Pacis FM in Uganda. The UN projects were the peacekeeping operation mission radio stations Radio Okapi in DRC, Radio Miraya in Sudan, Radio UNMIL in Liberia, and Radio UNMEE in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

### **3.3.1 Organizational sphere**

I did not find much information about influences on the NGO and RO organizational level, possibly due to a reluctance to publicise internal tensions and challenges. Most of the organizational information was on the official or unofficial goals of the organizations, which generally related to promoting peace, democracy and human rights, with the ROs also driven by idealistic religious imperatives, and the UN radio projects also interested in promoting their UN Security Council mandates and the peacekeeping missions that the projects were attached to (Marks, 2005; Slachmuislder, 2005; Okoli, 2001; SFCG, 2006; Dahinden, 2007; Price & Thompson, 2002; Radio Netherlands, 2003; Willum, 2003; Ginifer, 2006; DFID, 2007; Palmer, 2004; JRS, 2001; JRS #1, 2006; SCIAF, 2006; UGPRESS, 2004; BBC, 2004; AVSI, 2006; Lefevere, 2007; Radio Veritas, 2007; Lindley, 2004; Hunt, 2006; U.N. Wire, 2000; UN PBPU, 2003; MONUC, 2006; Manuel, 2004). In addition there were explicit, implicit, and possibly unconscious references to media codes of practice for some of the projects, international human rights norms or conventions, and/or Western or local conflict resolution principles and theories (Fondation Hirondelle, 2007; Dahinden, 2007; Slachmuislder, 2005; SFCG, nd; Willum, 2003; Hay, 1999; Lefevere, 2007; Radio Veritas, 2007; JRS, 2001; JRS #2, 2006; JRS, 2002; MONUC, 2006).

I found only one opaque reference to organizational conflict or inefficiency at an NGO funded project, and none for RO projects. An assessment of Talking Drum Studios in Liberia ‘detected certain concerns and questions about work relations and management’ (Abdalla, Davenport, McTyre & Smith, 2002: 40). Furthermore, Radio Maendeleo in DRC routinely sourced their national news from newspapers based in

Kinshasa that were allegedly fond of circulating rumours - particularly if they were anti-Rwandan (Willum, 2003: 8).

I found more references to organizational problems with the UN peace radio projects. Briefly, challenges relate to turf-wars between different departments at the UN headquarters in New York, lack of capacity for peace media work at headquarters and/or mission levels, lack of vision and initiative at headquarters and/or mission levels, weak or inappropriate mandates, limited planning and *ad hoc* project setups, and conflicts of interest between the needs to promote the mission and peace and truthful programming were among the main organizational challenges to UN peace radio (Price & Thompson, 2002; Hunt, 2006; UN Brahimi, 2000; Loewenberg, 2006; Lindley, 2004; Hay, 1999; Domeniconi, 2004; BBC, 2006).

### **3.3.2 Individual sphere**

Individuals working in the organizations could also create constraints on programming according to the reports. In the NGO and RO organizations some of the journalists/communicators came laden with bitter personal experiences from the conflicts, including losing both close and extended family members, which made their programming biased in ways that did not promote peace. Some were also affected by general prejudices and stereotypes, promoted their own “ethnic” groups at the expense of other “ethnic” groups, or were vulnerable to pressure, corruption or undue influence by conflict parties. Some also lacked sufficient media training (Slachmuislder, 2005; Slachmuislder, 2003; Radio Netherlands, 2003; Willum, 2003; JRS, 2001; Lefevere, 2007).

The reports indicated that untrained people promoting rumours and falsehoods were employed at some of the UN projects, while in Liberia ‘the recruitment to UNMIL Radio of a number of journalists from Charles Taylor’s vehemently anti-UN radio station, Kiss FM, jeopardised the station’s integrity amongst existing media practitioners and of course through their reporting and broadcasting’ (Hunt, 2006: 59).

### 3.3.3 Economic sphere

The projects also faced economic constraints. These were worst for the NGO and RO projects, which were all reliant on external funders in the shape of NGOs, ROs, foreign governments and inter-governmental organisations that would provide economic support, staffing or technical partnerships. The external funders provided time-limited and often inadequate or delayed support that could be withdrawn, sometimes at short notice, resulting in project crises and sometimes the shutting down of projects. The external funding could be withdrawn temporarily or permanently because the grant period was finished (even though peace radio projects are very long term efforts), but also because of procedural disputes among the funders, because of funding shortages for the funders, because of a degradation in the service offered by the projects for instance due to domestic interference from the political sphere, due to general disapproval of the performance of the projects, or because of a change in priorities by the funders. As the funding was often inadequate, the projects faced staffing and equipment challenges. Furthermore, as much of the funding was earmarked for specific activities, the projects could face difficulties in reacting effectively to unexpected events on the ground that required a different allocation of resources (Okoli, 2001; Willum, 2003; Radio Netherlands, 2003; JRS, 2001; BBC, 2004; Radio Veritas, 2007; Lefevere, 2007). In an e-mail-exchange with me, Alvito de Souza, Assistant Secretary General of World Catholic Organization for Communication (SIGNIS), commented:

As you noted some of the initiatives that were started ... seem to have come to the end of their funding and thus stopped. This remains a fundamental problem with such international partnerships that remain essentially based on the international agency partner's ability to secure funding. Peace radio and conflict management are long-term human processes that do not neatly fit into the logical frameworks, time lines and task-result dynamics of current project management processes. Although I think that this is a generally accepted fact, clearly not much has changed on the ground! (de Souza e-mail correspondence, 2006).

In the case of STAR Radio in Liberia, Okoli noted that 'the lack of a long term plan by the United States to ensure funding for STAR Radio and the observed delay in the way

the EU allocates funds illustrate the overall lack of a long term commitment on the part of regional organisations and governments to provide funding for peace broadcasting' (2001: np).

In addition, in the reports there were hints of some direct pressure by the external funders on the media organizations to alter their programming beyond the implicit pressure to conform to project plans that can attract funding. In the case of MEGA FM in Uganda, a report for the British government's Department of International Development (DFID) recommends that it, as the main or only funding organisation, should influence programming at the station in the direction of 'bolder approaches and more risk taking on controversial issues' (Ginifer, 2006: 30).

Clearly, self-sustainability would be an advantage for many of these projects. One interesting example is Radio Maendeleo in DRC, which had, as the other projects, been externally funded from the beginning, lurching from economic crisis to crisis and chronically under resourced. It eventually received funding from the US NGO National Endowment for Democracy (which was also the sponsor of Radio Selam production) to purchase equipment to help it become self-sufficient by offering public services such as Internet-access, CD-ROM burning, and scanning and photocopying services. It also sold advertising time. However, the self-financing options were limited at Radio Maendeleo, with an average of 1,000 Euros being earned per month from these activities. Willum concluded that 'with an annual budget well beyond [...] 200,000 [EUR], there is no indication that Radio Maendeleo should be able to become self-financing even in the very long term' (2003: 7). Interestingly however, in 2007 the UK government's DFID and Africa Conflict Prevention Pool stopped financing MEGA FM in Uganda as allegedly 'the radio is fully self-sustaining from advertising revenue and sponsored programmes', although DFID was 'exploring the possibility of some limited ongoing support for specific peace-building programmes, such as radio drama' (DFID, 2007: np)

### **3.3.4 Political sphere**

According to the reports the NGO and RO peace radio projects all faced pressures from the political sphere, although to different degrees dependent on the country. These pressures included at their most extreme killings of media workers by suspected government elements or rebels, and the physical destruction of premises, looting of equipment, shutting down of stations, direct censorship of broadcasts, and removal of frequency allotments. There were death threats, detainment of media workers, physical abuse of media workers, and pressures leading to self-censorship (Dahinden, 2007; Willum, 2003; BBC, 2007; Ginifer, 2006; Marks, nd; UNESCO, 2009; RSF, 2002; Slachmuislder, 2004; Price & Thompson, 2002; CPJ, 2002; BBC, 2006; AFP, 2003; CNS, 2006; Lefevere, 2007; Okoli, 2001).

At three of the UN peace radio projects – Radio Okapi in DRC, Radio Miraya in Sudan, Radio UNMEE in Ethiopia and Eritrea – there were reports of killings, beatings, arrests (Radio Okapi) and the refusal to allow broadcasts (Radio Miraya and Radio UNMEE) (Radio Netherlands, 2002; UN Briefing, 2007; BBC, 2007; UNESCO, 2009; AP, 2006; Manuel, 2004; Lindley, 2004).

### **3.3.5 Conclusion: constraints facing African peace radio**

As we saw above, the peace radio projects covered by the reports I examined faced pressures from the organizational, individual, economic and political spheres. Therefore I feel that the findings of my literature review strengthen the case for using my four hypothesized spheres of influence to examine constraints facing the Radio Selam project.



## **Chapter Four: Radio Selam**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I examine some major ways in which the four spheres of influence play a role in the radio Selam project and might play a role in constraining it.

I first provide some context by introducing Ethiopian politics, Ethiopian conflicts, the Ethiopian media sphere, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and, finally, Radio Selam.

Following this I present four sub-chapters that examine each of the four spheres. As noted previously the spheres are assumed to interact, and so the chapter divisions only serve to roughly separate the different forces, with conceptual overlap in many places. Furthermore, each sphere sub-chapter contains further sub-chapters in order to highlight “normal” processes on the one hand, and sub-chapters that examine constraints on the processes on the other hand.

### **4.2 Ethiopia**

Ethiopia as a political entity has long historical roots stretching back at least to the Axumite Empire in Tigray around the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. At its height this empire, centred on Ethiopia’s mainly Orthodox Christian northern highlands and large parts of modern day Eritrea, is believed to have encompassed parts of Yemen, Djibouti and Sudan, and it has a powerful grip on the imagination of many Ethiopians even today. The historical identity of the state is closely tied to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), and Ethiopia is still often perceived as an essentially “Christian country” in the eyes of many both inside and outside its borders<sup>13</sup>. Church tradition holds that it was founded

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<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that 32.8 per cent of Ethiopians identify themselves as Muslim (ibid.), ‘to the Orthodox, conversion meant inclusion in a supra-tribal polity under an emperor. As a consequence the Muslims have been prohibited from taking part in political life throughout most of Ethiopian history’ (Eide, 2000: 1). (Presumably something similar can be said for non-converted followers of traditional African religions, of which there are numerous examples in Ethiopia).

in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, while historical research has concluded that Orthodox Christianity became the official religion of the Axumite Kingdom in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, making it one of the first polities to adopt Christianity. Thus during imperial times the 'imperial centre, monolithic and uniform as it may seem, is ... a body with two heads, the emperor and patriarch. The patriarch, through the theology and traditions of the EOC, gave credibility to the imperial myth of an emperor being almost divine' (Eide, 2000: 32). Today an estimated 60.8 per cent of Ethiopians identify themselves as Christians. An estimated 50.6 per cent of these are Orthodox Christians, reflecting the primacy of the EOC (CIA World Factbook, 2009: np; Trimingham, 1952: 44; Meri, 2006: 12; Eide, 2000: 1).

The expansion to the borders of modern day Ethiopia happened comparatively recently. It was during the reign of Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II (ruled: 1889-1913) that the kingdom expanded south and east to form the borders that make up contemporary Ethiopia, with his eventual successor Emperor Haile Selassie (ruled: 1930-1974) consolidating the territorial gains as well as the spread of the Amharic language of the highlands, and the conversion of new groups to Orthodox Christianity. While the empire was ruled by people that were considered ethnic Amharas and occasionally Tigres from the highlands, Modern Ethiopia, with a population estimated to number about 80 million in 2008 (ECSA, 2008: 2), has within its borders more than 80 different 'ethnic' groups, many of which had not been ruled by the highlanders previously. As we shall see, this history of Amhara/Tigray "domination" continues to be a source of considerable friction in Ethiopia.

### **4.3 The Ethiopian government, the media, identity and conflict**

In 1974 Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed in a coup. After a period of flux the military took over, and eventually Mengistu Haile Mariam, an officer of the Marxist-Stalinist "Dergue" ("The Committee") military junta, rose to power after a bloody internal struggle. His rule became increasingly unpopular partially due to wide ranging centralisation reforms, and many were shocked by his so-called "Red Terror"

campaign against political adversaries that is believed to have killed 'hundreds of thousands' between 1975-1978 (HRW, 1999: np). Rebellion came soon, but had its roots in developments predating Mengistu. During the last years of Haile Selassie's regime, peasant rebellions had evolved into nationalistic or ethnically based liberation movements that sought independence from what they saw as a long-standing Amhara domination. First out was the nationalist Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1962, which fought a 30-year insurgency war against Ethiopia, finally gaining independence for Eritrea in 1993 following the fall of Mengistu's regime. In the early 1970s the ethnically based Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), as well as other rebel movements, swung into action. Meanwhile, the entente between the two Cold War superpowers towards the end of the 1980s began to threaten international support for Mengistu's regime. By 1991 TPLF, backed up primarily by EPLF, had reached Addis Ababa. Mengistu had already fled, going into exile in Zimbabwe in an operation orchestrated by the United States (Wrong, 2005).

In 1989, two years before seizing Addis Ababa from the Dergue, TPLF established the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF); a coalition of different ethnically based movements that provided TPLF with allies in the final push for victory, and during and after the establishment of government (Aalen, 2002: 6).

This coalition, with a controlling TPLF core, still rules the country today. Tronvoll and Aalen argue that Ethiopia under EPRDF can be classified as what Diamond (2002) calls a *hybrid regime*, as it 'has a democratic constitution and a form of multi-party elections normally linked to liberal democracies, but its practices are highly authoritarian and basic human rights are undermined' (2008: 111). In 2002 Aalen asserted that 'common factors for all the opposition parties are that none of them has any influence on the political process and that they are all victims of government threats and harassment, especially in rural areas' (2002: 8).

EPRDF split the country up into ethnically divided regions, with the new Ethiopian Constitution in theory giving Ethiopia's regional 'nations, nationalities and peoples' an 'unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession' (FDRE Constitution, 1994: Art 39). The self-determination focus particularly reflected the Marxist-Leninist background of TPLF (Aalen, 2002).

It can in fact be useful to keep in mind this Marxist-Leninist background when looking at the overall behaviour of the government (although clearly it is not the only determinant): 'Like the Soviet Union, Ethiopia went from feudal monarchy to Marxist revolution without going through capitalism. This history casts a long shadow even today, particularly in terms of how the Government sees issues' (BA, 2009: np).

Meles Zenawi, the Tigrayan TPLF-leader, was elected Prime Minister in the regional and federal elections of 1995 – a position he continued to hold in the autumn of 2009. A number of political organisations withdrew from the transitional government at an early stage, including OLF, which pulled out in the pre-election period for the 1992 regional assembly elections and soon resumed armed opposition. These elections were tainted by (often credible) accusations of serious fraud and intimidation. EPRDF won 96.6 per cent of the vote, a trend that continued in subsequent elections up until 2005 in 'an expression of the ruling party's control of and pressure on the electorate' (Aalen, 2002: 7). EPRDF also created proxy political parties ('puppet parties') among Ethiopia's different ethnic groups<sup>14</sup> (ibid.).

Tronvoll and Aalen noted that EPRDF allowed freer competition at least in Ethiopia's cities and in the media in the 2005 pre-national-election period. They reported that an 'unprecedented level of openness was observed – opposition parties gained access to state-owned radio and television and were given a free hand to organize large rallies in the capital' (2008: 112). The opposition won large majorities in the capital Addis Ababa and other urban centres. Unfortunately however, this simply marked a

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<sup>14</sup> When EPRDF member party Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition signed up to an opposition statement protesting over this in 1993, they were thrown out of the coalition.

'liberalisation intermezzo' (Tronvoll and Aalen, 2008: 112). In fact, the results still recorded a large country-wide win for EPRDF following a 'highly dubious re-run and recount process in disputed constituencies', and due to the government's tight control over local government structures in rural areas (ibid.).

A brutal crack down on protesters, opposition members and the media followed. Furthermore, Tronvoll and Aalen labelled the 2008 local elections 'the return of electoral authoritarianism', detailing a dramatic increase in abuses and tight state-control right down to the local level that 'turned the clock back more than 15 years' in terms of democratisation (2008: 119). This included reforms that led to a great increase in the number of EPRDF representatives in local councils, presenting a 'totalitarian picture when up to one third of the inhabitants may be members of the local government councils, and a similar number are members of the party, resulting in overwhelming control of the local community' (Tronvoll & Aalen, 2008: 116).

Furthermore, the government keeps a tight reign on the media even though a 1992 media proclamation abolished censorship (which had been almost absolute pre-EPRDF, and particularly during the Dergue), provided for access to information – particularly the right to seek and obtain information from any branch of government – and allowed anyone to engage in press activity as long as the person or group obtained a license from the Ministry of Information or its regional bureaus (Desalegn, 2004: 3). Ethiopia has also signed and ratified a number of international agreements that include clauses on freedom of speech and the press, and included a number of these clauses in its constitution (Tamrat, 2008).

During EPRDF-rule many private newspapers sprung up, and with new freedoms a large number were highly critical of the government, including many opposed to ethnic federalism, which they saw as destroying the legacy of a "united" Ethiopia under "Amhara rule", and others opposed to what they saw as an illegitimate Tigrayan minority government or the continuation of "highlander domination" (Styan, 1999; Desalegn, 2004). Many newspapers also exhibited 'the worst excesses of yellow

journalism', and there was a 'lack of professional ethics in reporting and news management' (Desalegn, 2004: 6). Prime Minister Meles on one occasion described the private press as the 'gutter press' (ibid.). However, not all newspapers were this bad, they were improving year-on-year, and the private press had a better track record than the government press when it came to public education; engaging in investigative reporting, the exposure of policy failures, public inefficiency and corruption. It was also better at representing the diversity of views (ibid.). The conduct of the private press had even led to some improvements in the performance of the government press: 'The public media now reports on inefficiency and malpractice in government agencies, and has offered debates in which critics of the government have participated. Occasionally, it reports on the activities of opposition political parties. This would have been unthinkable some ten years ago' (Desalegn, 2004: 7).

EPRDF, even if not as controlling as previous Ethiopian regimes, engaged in jailings and serious harassment of journalists almost from the beginning, and following the 2005 elections the situation has worsened significantly (US SD, 2007: np). In 2008 the deputy editor of an independent newspaper commented: "It's becoming routine for journalists: You report something, then you go to the police station" (Debretsion, 2008 in CPJ, 2009: np). According to an interview in 2009 with Dawit Kebede, who launched a new newspaper after spending 9 months in jail following the elections: "Before the 2005 elections, there were a lot of newspapers. Today, we can say there are maybe two or three genuinely independent [political] newspapers for a population of 80 million" (Dawit in CPJ #2, 2009: np). Many newspapers practiced self-censorship out of fear of provoking the wrath of the authorities (CPJ #2, 2009: np).

Until recently all radio and TV-stations in Ethiopia were government owned or government controlled, and this continues to hold true for TV at the end of 2009 (there are indications that private TV-licenses might be granted in late 2010 or 2011 (Southwood, 2009)). The Ethiopian Broadcast Authority did not invite applications for private radio licenses until 2004. In 2006 two licenses were finally granted. Commenting on the delays, Desalegn argued that they had occurred 'partly because

the licensing agency was not established but more importantly because the government is apprehensive of losing one of its most important weapons of political control and manipulation' (2004: 3). By 2008 there were three private radio stations, with the government approving the country's first private, foreign language station in June of that year (CPJ, 2009).

There are indications that the government keeps the private stations on a tight leash, and allegations that their licence holders are close to the government. However, in an interview with Christian Science Monitor one licensee said that she had never been censored during her seven years on the air for government radio, but admitted to self-censorship: "We say that it is just like walking on a tightrope because we are in a difficult position" (Maeza, 2007 in Benequista, 2007: np). Leonard Vincent, the director of Reporters Without Borders Africa, believes that the private radio licences are "part of a campaign by the government to make-believe that things are improving" (2007 in Benequista, 2007: np). For his part, the deputy director general of the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority commented, "I don't agree with this idea of letting the media say whatever it wants. ... This doesn't work in developing countries" (Desta, 2007 in Benequista, 2007: np).

Ethiopia is the scene of a number of insurgencies and other violent conflicts, many of which are between different "ethnic" groups, or between such "ethnic" groups and the government, over resources, influence and representation. As we shall see later EECMY is particularly affected by one such conflict related to the Oromo ethnic identity community, and so I will now focus a little on the issue of identity conflict in Ethiopia.

It is first worth noting that one should not assume that people's ethnic identities are simply based on ancestral ties. Emperor Haile Selassie himself, a stalwart of the perceived Amhara domination, came from a mixed Oromo, Amhara and Gurage family (Mockler, 2003: 387). In fact, 'marriages across ethnic lines are common and ethnic groups have intermingled, creating large ethnically mixed populations.

Particularly the Amhara, and to some extent also the Oromo, are spread all over the country, and have intermarried with the local population where they have settled' (Aalen, 2008: 75). In general, definitional problems with the common understanding of an ethnic group as a collectivity of people who share the same primordial characteristics such as common ancestry, language, and culture become obvious when considering Ethiopia:

There are instances in the Horn [of Africa] in which just belonging to the same religion seems to suffice to classify people as members of an ethnic group, although they might differ in other criteria. For example, in central and southern Ethiopia, if an Oromo is Orthodox Christian that individual may be classified as an Amhara regardless of his or her ethnic ancestry or lineage. In other instances, as in the Oromo regions, language has been used as the criterion for determining membership, despite other differences. But there are also cases where commonality in language and religion has not signified membership of the same ethnic group (Hizikias, 1996: np).

The most common definition of ethnicity today holds that such "primordial characteristics" are not very accurate indicators. Instead, the constructivist view holds that fluctuating subjective views are more important, making ethnicity the outcome of 'self-ascription and selective interpretation of meaningful cultural and historical experiences' (Aalen, 2008: 75).

In line with this constructivist view, several researchers (for instance Hizikias, 1996 and Aalen, 2008) argue that an elite-driven view of supposedly ethnic conflicts is useful in Ethiopia. Aalen (2008) contends that the government's focus on a right to ethnic self-determination in the constitution is simply there to neutralise opposition, and that the denial of this "right" seems to have led to increased local claims to be seen as separate ethnic groups with a right to self-determination – including among those that previously did not consider themselves as such a distinct group (Aalen, 2008: 73-74; Kymlicka, 2006).

The result has been a sharpening of divides at both the local and national level and an increase in local conflicts, sometimes exacerbated by divide and rule or simply



discriminatory practices by regional political leaders tied to the EPRDF regime. Land and resources that were previously undisputed or communal have become the object of intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic disputes as ethnic polarisation and claims for self-determination have increased (Aalen, 2002). The NGO Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) confirms this, noting an increase in identity-based conflicts over resources, influence and representation across the country, and estimating that there were 200,000-250,000 people displaced by conflict in Ethiopia in 2007 (IDMC, 2007: 4-5; IDMC #2, 2007: np).

IDMC also notes that one of the older conflicts that has widened is that between the state and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). EECMY, the church behind Radio Selam, was founded among the Oromo 'ethnic' group and has been linked somewhat to Oromo nationalism. Thus I now give a short introduction to this nationalism.

The 'growth of pan-Oromo consciousness and a sense of national identity are comparatively recent but burgeoning', (Baxter & Hultin et al, 1996: 7), and the Oromo community's place as the country's largest "ethnic" group is not lost on many in the general population, some of who fear that they might come to dominate the country. Oromos are estimated to number over 25 million people according to the 2007 Ethiopian Census, or 34.5 percent of the population (2008: 16). The former advisor in EECMY's Peace Office commented:

Not everywhere you go, but in many instances people feel threatened. Oromos are huge in their numbers. They're the largest in East Africa in terms of a singular ethnic group. It's not a single community, but the ethnic group's potential as a nationality within the broader perspective of Ethiopia - it's huge. So when EPRDF first came into power they provided the ability for different people's to live up to their cultures, their language, what have you, and a lot of groups did that, but when the Oromos did it makes a lot of noise because there's more of them (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

A contributing factor to the rise of pan-Oromo consciousness seems to have been the rise of Marxism in Ethiopia in the 1970s and the subsequent creation of the OLF, founded in 1974 to fight for the rights of Oromos and to gain an independent

‘Oromia’. The OLF gained a boost from 1978 when it became clear that Dergue leader Mengistu was not interested in granting autonomy or independence to the regions, with its ranks swelling with fleeing intellectual Oromo purged from Mengistu’s government. However, the OLF ‘was not able to rally much support among the Oromo’ until the 1984 famine. It took several years of hardships - topped by the famine and subsequent policies of forced resettlement and villagization - for the Oromo masses to really begin to support the independence movement (Eide, 2000: 160, 161).

Today, along with the increase in ethnic self-identification and conflict, support for the OLF has continued to grow among the general Oromo population. An anonymous interviewee believes that “most” Oromos today support the OLF (Anonymous interviewee, 2007). However, EECMY’s former advisor in its Peace Office, which initiated the Radio Selam project, told me that while there are some hardliners within OLF that want the Oromo areas to secede from Ethiopia, and hardliners that think that ‘military or violent means are a legitimate exercise towards achieving a greater level of autonomy within the Ethiopian structure’, most Oromos in his view do not support violent means, but simply wish for a ‘greater voice for their own people. At the end of the day a decent living for yourself and your family. Forget the Oromo nationalism and all that. I mean, if everybody had the ability to enjoy not only the basics but a higher quality of life, then the idea of nationalism towards one ethnicity or another I don’t think would be on the front-burner for anybody’ (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

Nevertheless OLF is seen as quite a major threat by EPRDF. The rebel group carries out irregular attacks, and the government frequently accuses particularly Oromos of links to the group, meting out beatings, jailings and killings (US SD, 2008: np). Journalists are also punished for allegedly collaborating with OLF or for simply reporting on its activities (US SD, 2009: np).

#### **4.4 Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus**

For more than a century the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has found itself competing not only with Islamic but also with Lutheran and other Christian movements that have enjoyed significant growth particularly in recent decades. This includes the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the Protestant church behind Radio Selam. Having expanded from about twenty thousand members at its founding in 1959 to more than 4.8 million today, EECMY is claimed to be the largest Lutheran church in Ethiopia and the second largest worldwide<sup>15</sup> (EECMY, 2007: np; Lechnitz, 2008: np).

Although founded in 1959, EECMY can trace its roots to Western missionary efforts particularly among people of the Oromo “ethnic” group in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly by the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM). It is no coincidence that the Oromo were the target for these efforts, as they are as noted the largest “ethnic” group in the country. In addition many Oromo were Muslim or followers of the “pagan” indigenous Oromo religion Waaqa<sup>16</sup>, and thus considered fertile ground for evangelising (Arén, 1999).

EECMY enjoyed relatively good relations with the strongly reformist Emperor Haile Selassie thanks to the church’s (and its evangelist forebears’) focus on medical and other development work, with some church members even being granted important government positions (Arén, 1999; Eide, 2000). However, during Dergue rule (1974-1991) EECMY’s Oromo domination<sup>17</sup> began to cause it trouble in the wake of the rise

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<sup>15</sup> EECMY is estimated to have gained about one million members in the five years leading up to 2007 mainly due to expanding families and evangelisation efforts (Lechnitz, 2008: np). The claim that EECMY is the largest church in Ethiopia and the second largest in the world is made by a Canadian pastor in an article on the Lutheran World Federation website, while the EECMY website states that EECMY had more than 4.8 million members in 2007 (Lechnitz, 2008: np; EECMY, 2007: np). However, on its website the other large Ethiopian evangelical church, The Ethiopian Kale Hewyet Church, an indigenous church growing out of efforts by the American SIM (Sudan Interior Mission) from 1928, claims to have 5 million members (KHC Website, 2009: np). According to the Wikipedia page for Kale Hewyet, it is “the largest evangelical denomination in Ethiopia” with an “estimated 4-5 million members and adherents” (Wiki, 2009: np). According to the Wikipedia page for EECMY, it had between 4.7 and 5 million members in 2005 (Wiki #2, 2009: np). For his part Eide states that Kale Hewyet has a “similar growth rate” to that of EECMY (2000: 2). The Church of Sweden has the world’s largest membership base of the Lutheran churches, with 6.9 million members in 2007.

<sup>16</sup> These days 47.5% of the Oromo in Ethiopia consider themselves Muslim, 30.5% Orthodox Christian, 17.7% Lutheran, and the remainder traditional (Waaqa) or other religions (Ethiopian Census, 2008: Table 6).

<sup>17</sup> During the years 1962-71 an average of 68% of EECMY members were Oromo while the rest were mostly Sidama and Kambaata, and in addition some smaller ethnic groups were represented (Eide, 2000: 56). According

of Oromo nationalist opposition to the oppressive regime. EECMY's position was not helped by the fact that the leadership in one of the most prominent Marxist coalitions (MEISON) purged from the government by Mengistu was dominated by intellectual Oromo and headed by an Oromo from Wallaga, the site of EECMY's influential Western Synod. By 1981 'government propaganda ... accused the EECMY of being an OLF stronghold' (Eide, 2000: 160-161).

During these years a number of employees of the church suffered imprisonment and/or torture, accused of supporting OLF, of engaging in 'political activity', or even just of promoting Christianity (Eide, 2000). In 1979 the EECMY Secretary-General Guddina Tumsaa, a highly educated and very influential person with strong reformist visions and a high level of activity on the international church scene, was secretly arrested and executed (Eide, 2000: 175-178). By 1984 no less than 355 of EECMY's churches in the Wallagga synod, 94% of the total, had been closed by the government (Eide, 2000: 188).

Despite the revolutionary government's claims that there were organised and large-scale connections between EECMY and OLF, they advanced no evidence to this effect and Eide has not been able to locate any. During his research Eide only managed to identify three people with possible connections with OLF out of the 600 employees of the Western Synod (Eide, 2000: 206). There was in other words no evidence of any widespread or centrally coordinated collaboration between the church leadership and OLF.

In addition to the OLF/EECMY allegations, the church was harassed due to the very fact that it was a religious organisation. It was further criticised for being an "imported

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to a map on the EECMY website detailing the number of members in the different synods, today slightly less than 3 million of the church's 5 million members are based in the official Oromia region, where 87.8 percent of the 27-million strong population was classed as Oromo according to the 2007 Ethiopian Census (EECMY, 2007: np; Ethiopian Census, 2008: tables 1 & 5). The former Advisor to EECMY's Peace Office told me that Oromos make up the bulk of the membership base, followed by 'ethnicities' from Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

religion” due to the heavy involvement of foreign missionary organisations in its roots, founding and early operation (Eide, 2000: 194-198; Arén, 1999).

#### **4.5 Radio Selam: Overview**

Radio Selam<sup>18</sup> was a peace promotional radio programme, not a radio station. It featured as part of the wider Yemisirach Dimts<sup>19</sup> set of radio programmes produced at the Yemisirach Dimts Communications Services (YDCS) multi-media centre of EECMY in Addis Ababa. As Yemisirach Dimts is also a general title covering literature and audio-visual projects at YDCS, I follow the lead of Tamrat (2008) in referring to Yemisirach Dimts radio as YD Radio. The Radio Selam project was conceived as a potentially multi-year endeavour stretching beyond 2011, with the first year intended to run from February 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 to January 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 21; NED Grant attachment A, 2007: 1). 52 hours of programming were to be produced during the year, divided into four 15-minute programs per week. Two of the weekly programs were to be in Oromo and two in Amharic, and they were to be transmitted on a Short Wave (SW) frequency ‘accessible throughout Ethiopia’ as well as to parts of the Ethiopian Diaspora (NED Grant attachment A, 2007: 1).

Radio Selam was intended to ‘provide alternative lenses through which identity-based conflicts in Ethiopia can be viewed and resolved,’ according to grant documents provided by the project’s external funder of production, the US NGO National Endowment for Democracy (NED) (NED Grant attachment A, 2007: 1). Specifically, the station was to promote peace education, non-violence, inter-faith and inter-cultural co-existence, human rights, democracy and the rule of law (ibid.). According to my interpretation of the programme schedule draft for the first two months of production

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<sup>18</sup> According to Radio Selam Producer Wakshuma Terefe it was the project designers in the EECMY Peace Office that decided on the title “Radio Selam” (interview, 2007). The producers decided that as Radio Selam is actually a programme and not a radio station, the name should be changed. They wanted it to be a programme “which proclaims peace”, and so the title was changed to *Sagantaa Labsii Nagaa* (“Proclamation of Peace”) in Oromo and *Besrate Selam* (“Herald of Peace”) in Amharic (Wakshuma interview, 2007). However, I have opted for “Radio Selam” as it is the title used by several of the original creators of the project as well as the name registered with NED, the funding organisation.

<sup>19</sup> Yemisirach Dimts is Amharic for “Voice of Good Tidings”.

(May and June 2007), this was to be done by providing listeners with a conceptual understanding of conflict-related themes and the posited roots and causes of conflicts, and by encouraging behaviour conducive to positive social change and peace (RS schedule, 2007: np). The latter approach, encouraging peaceful behaviour, seems to rely on the power of examples from other parts of the world as well as constructive discussions between different parties to provide inspiration – in the schedule there is no mention of any plans to provide specific project proposals for communities. However, according to former EECMY Peace Office (PO) coordinator Dr. Mulletta Hurisa, programming was to partially focus on “early warning, conflict integration and conflict transformation issues” in a local context (interview, 2007).

The 16 programmes that were to be produced during the first two months included an introduction to EECMY’s peace and justice work through the PO, and topics such as ‘why peace radio?’, ‘what is peace?’, ‘what is conflict?’, ‘what does a culture of peace look like?’, and ‘our natural environment and peace’ (RS schedule, 2007: np). It also included programs on the role of the arts, kids/youth/students, women, men, the family, civil society, religious leaders and faith and religion in ‘striving for a culture of peace’ (ibid.). Finally, it included programmes on interfaith efforts based on interviews (ibid.).

The NED grant states that Radio Selam was to ‘test a variety of formats, including lectures, dramas, interviews, panel discussions and call-in shows’ (NED Grant attachment A, 2007: 1). However, the challenging drama format (Entertainment-Education) was in reality a part of the longer-term vision for the project. Gilchrest notes that it was more realistic to see this as an initiative for the envisioned second year of the project (Gilchrest interview, 2007). As we shall see later, there were also obstacles to broadcasting call-in shows.

According to the broadcast schedule draft, the first two months of production focused on two formats: interviews and ‘script reading’ (RS schedule, 2007: np), the latter of which presumably refers to the lectures noted in the NED grant. Interviews were to be

conducted with ordinary people ('a spectrum of Ethiopian society... children, men & women'), religious leaders, NGO staff and EECMY Peace Office staff, and a 'potential interview with knowledgeable person(s) on the connection between environment/resources and violent conflict' (ibid.). Script reading included 'case studies' from other parts of the world, as well as theoretical discussions (ibid.).

## **4.6 Organisational sphere**

This chapter will primarily examine the operation of, and challenges for, the two church departments most relevant to Radio Selam: the Peace Office and YDCS. It also considers the role of the church leadership.

However, as the church has close links to the Oromo "ethnic" community, and many of those involved with Radio Selam are Oromos, the chapter begins by highlighting these Oromo links to set the stage for later examinations of possible constraints linked to ethnic considerations.

### **4.6.1 EECMY and Oromo nationalism**

Eide writes that the organizing of 'disparate Evangelical Lutheran groups into one church was an important achievement. The alternative option, a number of regional Lutheran churches, would have added to the centrifugal forces already present as a result of ethnicity. Being aware of the undercurrents, the organizers strove to develop institutions with an integrating character' (2000: 54-55).

At the same time, several sources acknowledge that EECMY both was and continues to be an organisation particularly close to Oromos, as it has its historical roots among them and they continue to make up the bulk of the church's membership (Eide, 2000; Arén, 1999; Gilchrest interview, 2007; Taye interview, 2007). The evangelicals established a foothold in the Oromo areas around the same time as the Orthodox Church, which converted non-Christians wherever the Ethiopian Empire extended its reach. For Oromos in the newly "conquered" areas, 'Evangelical Christianity became

the religion of freedom' (Eide, 2000: 51). Also, the first, and for many years only, literature available in Oromiffa was the Bible and other religious texts translated in the 1890s by an Oromo freed slave and evangelical linked to Swedish Evangelical Mission, closely linking the development of Oromo literacy to the evangelistic movement that was to culminate in EECMY. In addition, for the first time the Bible was available in the vernacular where previously it had only been available in Gee'ez, an ancient language generally only understood by some Orthodox priests, 'laying the foundations for an indigenous interpretation of the Gospel' (Eide, 2000: 72; Arén, 1999).

EECMY's former Peace Office Advisor believes that today the Oromo people's ethnic self-identification still trumps their religious self-identification, although in some cases they are even seen as being one and the same thing:

In the Orthodox and in the Protestant communities I would say people lean more towards their clan, at least among the Oromo. In my opinion someone is Oromo before he or she is a Christian or Muslim. Although not in all cases, because in places like Bale where the majority of Oromo are Muslim, they *would* say that they are still Oromo, and I think that trumps being Muslim – however, they twisted it by saying, “Well, yes, but to be Muslim is to be Oromo, and to be Oromo is to be Muslim”. So, “If you're a Christian, you're not Oromo!” So that exists as well (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

As we saw earlier, the church's Oromo history caused it to be accused of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). As we also saw, today, along with the increase in “ethnic” awareness and conflict, support for the OLF has also grown among the general Oromo population. The Anonymous interviewee noted that today “most people, Oromos within the church, probably have some level of sympathy-to-active-support for OLF” (interviewee, 2007). The interviewee continued:

We've got members of one that are members of another. For a significant period of years [during the first period of EPRDF rule] the OLF was a legitimate political entity in the country and operated as such. It had its own offices and so on. So, you know, members of any political party may or may not be members of a faith institution. OLF was on behalf of the Oromo people and



Mekane Yesus had its genesis within the Oromo community, and I think there's a natural fit between the two (Anonymous interviewee, 2007).

Because of this link between Oromos and EECMY, I believe it is reasonable to say that some of the Oromos involved with Radio Selam probably also identify closely with the Oromo cause. As we shall see hints of this cropped up during my interviews. On the other hand, not all members of the church are Oromos at the grassroots or at the headquarters level. For instance, one of the two producers that worked on Radio Selam was Amhara, as was the Education Section head in the Peace Office, who was meant to follow up contacts between the Peace Office and YDCS regarding Radio Selam, and was the wife of EECMY's president. Thus it would be too simple to call EECMY an "Oromo church".

#### **4.6.2 EECMY, The Peace Office and Radio Selam**

EECMY has a General Office and some other church institutions based in Addis Ababa, and is organised into synods, evangelical 'Work Areas,' and 'Joint Programmes' (EECMY #1, 2009: np). The Peace Office (PO), the initiator of the Radio Selam project, is organised under the General Office. The joint programmes include EECMY's media department, Radio Selam's "host" Yemisirach Dimts Communications Services (YDCS) (ibid.; Taye interview, 2007).

As we saw in the theory chapter, individual news organizations have routines that will produce media content that is acceptable to consumers, possible to process, and available from suppliers, and the organizations can generally be divided into three main sections – management, media professionals and technical staff – that conflict or interact in other ways (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 88; Engwall, 1978). EECMY, a major Ethiopian church, is of course more than its media divisions, but a similar organizational setup can be identified as relating to Radio Selam even though roles overlap somewhat, and Radio Selam is also subject to routines with similar criteria.

At the top of the organizational hierarchy is the church leadership, and below that is the management in the PO. Below that are Radio Selam's project leaders in the PO,

which were central to the initiation of the project, wrote up the programming schedule that the producers at YDCS had to follow, and were responsible for providing the producers with peacebuilding expertise. The project leaders also followed up relations with an external sponsor of Radio Selam's programme production, which paid earmarked funds into the PO account. At YDCS a radio head was responsible for administering and monitoring the work of Radio Selam's producers and production technician, and for maintaining relations with the PO. The PO and YDCS are horizontally aligned, and according to the former PO coordinator, Radio Selam was "department-to-department alliance," contingent on the PO paying for production and broadcasting with the funds it received from the external sponsor (Mulletta interview, 2007).

The PO is answerable to the General Office with a president and secretary general at the top, then a PO Peace Commission (PC), then a PO Executive Committee (EC). Central individuals are EECMY's president, who is also the chairman of the PC and EC, as well as the secretary general. The Church has about 20 synods, and the synod chairpersons (pastors) are also members of the PC, as are the chairpersons of the joint programmes. In addition the General Office department heads, specifically the head of the Department of Evangelisation and Mission and the head of the Department of Administration and Finance, are members (Mamo interview, 2007). The EC has five members, while the PO coordinator is the secretary. There is the EECMY president, a man who runs a PO section dealing with children and youth affairs is a member, as are two "senior chairpersons" elected by synod leaders, while a woman who runs EECMY's Women's Ministry Coordinating Office is vice-chairman in order to make the EC "gender sensitive" (Mamo interview, 2007).

The PC is "the governing body that administers the affairs of this office" according to the PO's coordinator (Mamo interview, 2007). While the PO takes care of the "daily routines," the PC "takes care of all the affairs relating to peace issues in the country within the church" (ibid.). It 'holds a significant level of influence' over the PO (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 9). It 'oversees/controls the activities, budget, gives directives, is capable of hiring/firing, as well as examines and approves the strategic plan of the office' (ibid.).

The PC is meant to hold three meetings a year, although this is “often” reduced to two meetings according to the president (Itefa interview, 2007). Meanwhile, the EC is convened as deemed necessary, which in practice is more often than the PC convenes, and it ‘exercises the powers of the commission when the commission is not in session. As a result, the EC is in a better position to follow the day-to-day activities or situation of the PO’ (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 9).

Below the General Office, PC and EC is the PO coordinator, at times an assistant coordinator and advisor, and then Section heads, and finally there were in 2007 plans for focal persons responsible for field implementation of projects at the synod level (although these had not yet been employed).

According to the 2007 president, Reverend Itefa Gobena, the president’s role is to “give guidance on” the work of the PO, and the office reports its activities to him (Itefa interview, 2007). However, the PO is accountable to the church’s secretary general both as regards administrative and all other matters, and in practice he follows up the PO’s work more closely than the president, including releasing funds, approving work-related trips and more (Almaz interview, 2007).

The PO coordinator operates under and partly together with the president, secretary general, PC and EC. Until shortly prior to my fieldwork the Coordinator was aided by assistant coordinator Merga Negeri, and both had interacted with an official advisor, also recently departed: Brian Gilchrest. Under these are the several Section heads. In the field synods, including parishes, congregations and peace committees, manage the regular communication and implementation of PO projects (although some of their work was to be taken over by the PO focal persons once they had been employed) (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 9).

Although Radio Selam was EECMY’s first full-fledged peace radio programme, YD Radio had broadcast topics dealing with peace and conflict sporadically for some years

prior to the project. These were initiated by Dr. Mulletta Hurisa, the PO's coordinator between 2000 and 2003, and consisted of interviews with him on "biblically based peace building" (Mulletta interview, 2007). The infrequent nature of the broadcasts was due to funding restrictions according to Dr. Mulletta (ibid.).

In 2005 a professor at Addis Ababa University, a person from the Swedish Lutheran conflict resolution organisation Life and Peace Institute, and a person from the Norwegian NGO Norwegian Church Aid carried out an external evaluation of the PO's work. The PO's former assistant coordinator Merga was the office's resource person for the evaluation, and he told me that one of its recommendations was that the office should make better use of EECMY's other institutions, including YDCS. This got the ball rolling for the Radio Selam project. He added that they also chose YDCS "because they have a big audience. We can reach a larger audience in one month than we can reach even in two or three years with our normal activities at the [PO]. YDCS is very popular. We discussed with the leaders [of YDCS] and they were very happy for us to make use of YDCS for peace and reconciliation purposes" (Merga interview, 2007).

At the outset former PO advisor Gilchrest and assistant coordinator Merga were both listed as the project's "contact persons" for funder NED – a role that Gilchrest equated to that of a general manager due to the importance of maintaining sponsor relations (Gilchrest interview, 2007). The project instigators had agreed to submit a project proposal "basically outlining the project, where we would like to go with it, and who was potentially going to be funding it," to the president and general secretary before moving ahead (Gilchrest interview, 2007). "They were both fairly supportive. I met with both of them individually and outlined things, and there were no concerns voiced by either person. There were some ideas. I don't remember specifically, but ... in the case of [president] Iteffa [that involved] giving some comments and feedback on where we might actually go with this radio programme. So a level of support from the presidency both in terms of moving forwards and how the project might develop" (ibid.). He added that the president's role at this stage could be described as having

entailed “thumbs up, not active helping [or] pushing along, but thumbs up, basically” (ibid.). However, the leaders were not open to co-running the project with other religious organisations, even though Gilchrest would like to see that happen in some form in Ethiopia: “No, the church was ready to give its blessing to something that was owned by itself, so that’s where it was – and that’s okay” (ibid.).

The initial push to decide upon themes and formats for Radio Selam’s programme schedule seems to have been an iterative process driven by former advisor Gilchrest: “I’m the one that wrote up the themes ... which I was hoping we might engage with from the first year, and [then I would] distribute that as an advisor to the rest of the office and to YDCS as feedback to say, ‘okay, here’s some general themes. Now you can all [fill] in the gaps in terms of how we actually get these themes into producable content for radio’” (interview, 2007).

The coordinator explained the complementary roles of the PO and YDCS: “The programme, peace education on radio, is prepared in collaboration with YDCS. We prepare the materials, we produce the scripts, and we identify the items on which the programs can be made. YDCS gives us the technical support [for] preparing the actual programme, producing, recording, editing, transmitting, and so on” (Mamo interview, 2007). The former advisor also says that the people in the PO, and potentially outside experts brought in by the office, “would be the ones walking along the technical experts in developing the ideas we wanted incorporated within each broadcast” (ibid.). This entailed close cooperation between the PO and YDCS: “Yes, very close – it was a necessity” (ibid.). It involved cooperation on a “weekly, if not daily basis” (ibid.). According to the Education Section head, the PO would also suggest interviewees for Radio Selam, while the producers would sometimes themselves ask the PO for help in contacting potential interviewees (Almaz interview, 2007).

According to Mamo the people in the PO mainly interact with YDCS’ two radio producers, the Electronic Media Division (radio) head and the YDCS director, and “all of us [in the PO], whenever necessary, can have direct contact with YDCS. ...

Whenever issues arise we call them, they call us, we get together, we exchange ideas and messages – otherwise we don't have regular meetings and things like that" (Mamo interview, 2007). Following the departure of Gilchrest and Merga, Almaz had become the person officially "in charge" of the Radio Selam project (Almaz interview, 2007).

In the view of former PO coordinator Dr. Mulletta, "the strength of [Radio Selam] peace broadcasting is determined by the internal strength of the [PC and PO]. If that is strong then the possibility of broadcasting all these programmes and more is there" (Mulletta interview, 2007). However, the Education Section head disagreed with this: "It's fair, but it's not fair as well, because we hired them, we gave them all the responsibilities and we helped them with the materials and everything, so it's up to them if this radio project doesn't work or accomplish its mission. They have to really work hard, but we are here to help any time they come for assistance. Material, contacting people, whatever they need. If something happens, such as legal problems, we will approach people. But we aren't responsible – they are" (Almaz interview, 2007). The YDCS producers agreed with this. Solomon, the producer of the Amharic version of the show, commented that "the programmes are prepared by the radio people, so the [PO's] strength or weakness doesn't matter. That is my opinion" (Solomon interview, 2007).

As was also noted in the theory chapter, organisational theory often distinguishes between utilitarian and normative organisational goals, where the latter revolves around advancing 'value or achieving a valued condition' (McQuail, 2005: 283). In starting a peace radio project, the PO clearly signalled such a normative goal.

While evangelists and EECMY had traditionally avoided involvement with politics, during the 1970s the church began to warm to the idea of a "holistic ministry" that would not avoid the political reality affecting the country's development in so many ways. This development was mainly a result of the efforts of Guddinaa Tumsaa, EECMY's secretary general until his execution by the Dergue in 1979. Guddinaa, born in 1932 in the Oromo town of Wallagga, an EECMY power centre, had 'witnessed

how many of the evangelists in Wallaga suffered persecution and arbitrary court decisions, and having seen how the Amhara administration exploited ordinary people, he nurtured a passion for justice for his own people which led him into a strong commitment to political responsibility' (Eide, 2000: 60). The Dergue coup in 1974 put a more urgent spin on Guddinaa Tumsaa's already developing holistic theology, causing him to incorporate the political dimension as he 'understood that if the socialist perspective is taken seriously as a political challenge, the church could serve as an example for the state, a paradigm for what society needs' (Eide, 2001: np). For Guddinaa, the church aspired 'for justice, respect for human rights and the rule of law' (Guddinaa, 1975 in Eide, 2001: np). One of Guddinaa's many papers, "Memorandum" from 1975, spelled out central elements of his expanded version of 'holistic theology':

Holistic theology is an effort in rediscovering total human life. Apolitical life is not worthy of existence, uninvolvement is a denial of the goodness of creation and of the reality of incarnation. [...] In our Continent what is prevalent is the basis to define economic policy, agricultural development, foreign relations – "politics decides who should die and who should live." African theology should develop a political theology relevant to the African political life (1975 in Eide, 2000: 277).

Today the church officially adheres to a policy of "holistic ministry", but this approach has been weak and incomplete (Rosvold, 2008). Nevertheless former PO advisor Gilchrest told me that he believes that in a world where denominations such as the Mennonites and Quakers in Europe and the United States have become more politically active, some in EECMY have increasingly warmed to the idea of engaging in political activism. This, he believes, is an important backdrop to the creation of Radio Selam (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

The PO was established in 1993, and according to the EECMY website it is a 'non-hierarchical, relationship focused entity' (EECMY #3, 2009: np). It was established in light of the church's policy on 'holistic ministry' and 'flowing from a more than thirty-year history of embracing social justice alongside a growing recognition that peace building is a core element of the biblical gospels' (EECMY #2, 2009: np).

The PO's work focuses on advocacy, conflict analysis, education and mediation 'wherever ethnic, resource and religious clashes' take place (EECMY #2, 2009: np; Abraham, 2006: 54, 59). The website adds that while it primarily focuses on conflicts 'within the EECMY structure', it works with all peoples where the church's places of worship are based, as all Ethiopians are 'interconnected socially, economically and politically' (EECMY #2, 2009: np). Work conducted by the PO includes efforts to resolve 'ethnic' conflicts which the office believes has roots in 'political, economic, social and cultural discrepancies' (Abraham, 2006: 57). It also includes workshops to deal with internal EECMY conflicts related to 'leadership problems, competition over influence and church resources', and inter-religious peace conferences for instance in areas where there were conflicts between evangelists and representatives for other religious groups (Abraham, 2006: 59, 64).

#### **4.6.3 YDCS and Radio Selam**

As noted Radio Selam is a radio programme that makes up part of a set of radio programmes produced by EECMY titled Yemisirach Dimts (YD Radio). Yemisirach Dimts Communications Services (YDCS) media department produces this set of radio programmes. However, while YDCS in its current form dates from the 1990s, when EECMY was allowed to move its communications department back into the country from exile, it has a significant place in Ethiopian history dating back to the days of Haile Selassie, when EECMY produced content for Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Addis Ababa-based Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG).

RVOG, founded in 1963, was Africa's biggest broadcasting institution, with a network of seventeen production studios placed in countries in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and broadcasting in fourteen languages to millions of listeners in Africa and Asia (Lundgren, 1983). EECMY had been close to LWF since the church's founding a few years earlier. Negotiations with Haile Selassie's government were helped by the involvement of EECMY's second president Emmanuel Abraham, who doubled as a government minister (Emmanuel, 1995; Lundgren, 1983). EECMY, which had recently founded its Communication Ministry, produced programming on



the station for Ethiopian audiences at its Yemisirach Dimts studios, enabling it to become the first African church to join the missionary radio project, while LWF was the first private entity to be granted a radio license in Ethiopia (Tamrat, 2008: 33, 37).

The developments in EECMY towards a “holistic ministry” contributed to the formation of RVOG’s so-called “30-70 percent” programme policy, where 70 percent of programming was to focus on culture, education and news, while only 30 percent focused on evangelisation – unique among the world’s major evangelistic radio stations (Tamrat, 2008: 35-36; Eide, 2000). In this way the new socially (and eventually politically) focused normative goals of the church as a whole became an integral part of its radio work.

However, in 1977, three years after the revolution that brought the Dergue to power, the station was nationalised and renamed Radio Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia, Yemisirach Dimts’ multi-media buildings and studios were confiscated, and EECMY and LWF, helped by other organisations, were forced to broadcast (clandestinely in the case of EECMY to avoid further persecution in Ethiopia) into the country from exile (Tamrat, 2008).

Following the fall of the regime in 1991, the Yemisirach Dimts multi-media centre with studio was re-established at EECMY’s residential house at Mekanisa in west Addis Ababa in 1992 (it also has an older studio in the basement of its headquarters building in the city centre, but this is not used for Radio Selam). Taking ‘into consideration the respect and memory’ that the YD name ‘has in the minds of many Ethiopians’, EECMY revived this name but added the words “Communications Services” (Tamrat, 2008: 49). In 1995 exiled radio staff in Nairobi returned to join the local staff at Mekanisa. LWF’s Ethiopia-based RVOG is no more, and so a new YD Radio programme was added to the existing YD literature and audio-visual programmes, with broadcasting beginning the same year (Tamrat, 2008: 49).

YDCS was established as a joint programme of the church in 1994 (Tamrat, 2008: 49). This means that while it is an EECMY institution it has its own leadership structures and budget, its own constitution based on the church's constitution, and has more autonomy from the church's central leadership (Merga interview, 2007). A board administers YDCS, and the board is under an executive committee. The board comes together every two or three months, while YDCS division heads administer day-to-day work (Taye interview, 2007).

YDCS is divided into three main sections: Finance and Administration Division, Print Media Division, and Electronic Media Division (responsible for radio) (EMD). These divisions are headed by a Director, and below the Director are division heads, and then, in the case of the EMD, a programme organiser, eight producers and a production technician (Taye interview, 2007; Tamrat, 2008: 51; Alemayehu interview, 2007). In addition to radio, the EMD is responsible for video, audio, and the technical units (Taye interview, 2007).

The programmes on YD Radio are produced by YDCS at Mekanisa and are for political reasons (discussed later) sent by CD-ROM to the Christian radio station Trans World Radio (TWR) in Johannesburg, South Africa, which in turn broadcasts them to Ethiopia and parts of the Ethiopian Diaspora.

The EMD head told me that the YDCS director “once” conducted a random sample survey of listener numbers in western Ethiopia that found that “more than” 80 per cent listened to YD Radio. However, it is unclear how accurate this research is, and the EMD head admitted that there were probably more listeners in the west and south (inhabited mostly by Oromos as well as, particularly in the south, many small ethnic groups) than in other parts of the country as these were the areas that had been most focused on by the western missionary organisations that preceded Mekane Yesus:

Because the western and southern people were evangelised through German missions for the western part, [and] the Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish missions in the southern part. These people were introduced to the Christian

faith – they know it, and they like to listen. There are timely social issue programmes on marriage, on HIV/AIDS, on ecology, on any other thing. We study, we go there among the people, we listen to their hurts, what it is they need, and also the spiritual part – what they need. For example, we make mass conferences and then we ask the people, we send papers and sometimes they ask us. In such a way the southern peoples and the western peoples listen more to the programmes. The northern part is not this much because they are very conservative Orthodox, yeah, and also the eastern part is not this much – they are Muslims (Taye interview, 2007).

YD Radio officially produces 60 percent social and 40 percent spiritual programmes in line with EECMY's policy on "holistic ministry", although this is less than mandated by the original "30-70 percent" policy of RVOG, and even with this new policy "theory and practice do not coincide with the current operation of YD Radio" (Tamrat, 2008: 36, 51; Taye interview, 2008 in Tamrat, 2008: 36). Radio Selam is one of the social programmes. YD Radio produces programmes in seven languages, although Radio Selam was only produced in Amharic and Oromiffa. There were plans to possibly expand to other languages in the future for Radio Selam (Tamrat, 2008: 50; Mulletta interview, 2007).

Taye Abdissa headed the Electronic Media Division, and he told me that his responsibilities included coordinating Radio Selam with the PO. He ensured that progress reports for the external sponsor of Radio Selam's programme production were passed on to the PO, and that the PO's general requirements were met. In addition he monitored Radio Selam's programming (Taye interview, 2007). Radio Selam producer Solomon Gebre Selassie, who was responsible for the Amharic language programme, told me that he and Wakshuma Terefe, responsible for the Oromo programme, would always submit the plan for each programme, including details on interviewees, questions and scripts, to Taye. He might comment and request changes before allowing the producers to go ahead. Once the programmes were produced, he would listen to them before allowing them to be sent to South Africa. However, there had been no objections so far. In addition a meeting with the YDCS director would be held once every one or two months, and concerns with Radio Selam

from the management could potentially be brought up here, but this had also not happened so far (Solomon interview, 2007).

Taye characterises the cooperation with the PO as “very good. Of course, we started this broadcasting recently. Since we started I didn’t see any bad thing. Yeah, it is very interesting. The programme is dealt with by the leader – [PO coordinator] Mamo – and [Education Section head] Almaz. They are our contact people. We talk together, [and] do things together. We calculated the expenses for Radio Selam and gave the information to them. They made the [programming schedule] and the objectives, and we follow these. We don’t go our own ways” (Taye interview, 2007).

Despite the close cooperation between the PO and YDCS for Radio Selam, and the production of themes by the PO, “those producing each programme are basically self-monitoring in terms of type of content for the themes that are being broadcast. Solomon and Wakshuma, and others in the programme like the managers of YDCS as well – their heads are on the chopping block as well potentially” (Gilchrest interview, 2007). Wakshuma told me that each producer had significant freedom to shape the show:

For the simple decisions: what to produce, how to produce – it is only the producers who decide that. No one is helping, or no one is looking. No more decisions are being made. It is us: what to do, where to go. What to include and what not to include, and which direction to go – there are no guiding principles. [...] Do you know, I don’t even say “Thanks to Jesus,” I do not say that when I greet the listeners. I simply say, “Thanks to God.” God is for all, in general. So this is my principle. [I have] total freedom (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

Radio Selam production began in early May, and broadcasting in late July. When I interviewed Wakshuma in early September about twenty programmes had been sent to South Africa for broadcasting, and the programme had been broadcasting for a little over a month (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

The producers would conduct research, write the scripts and interview questions, and act as the radio presenters, mixers and occasional editors (Wakshuma interview, 2007). The centre's production technician, Alemayehu Dawit, would record the content, including the producer's dialogue and monologues, interviews, and more in YDCS' radio studio. Following this the programme would get edited and mixed using Cool Edit, which had been in use since 2005, the same year YDCS began recording on CDs instead of audiocassettes. Alemayehu would edit the Amharic language programme. As he did not speak Oromo, the producer of the Oromo language version would either edit it using his own discretion, or together with the Production Technician.

As the original interviews could last for two or three hours, the editor would shorten everything so that it fitted the 15-minute timeframe available for each programme. Sometimes the long interviews would also be divided into several pieces for use in several programmes. In addition, Alemayehu could suggest changes to make the content user-friendlier (an important basic routine to ensure that programming was acceptable to the "consumer", to use the terminology from the noted research on conventional media): "I am the first listener to the programme. If I don't understand what they are saying it will be confusing for the listener also, so we discuss such things, and edit if possible" (Alemayehu interview, 2007). However, Alemayehu did not have the authority to intentionally change the actual messages conveyed in the programming: "I can't do anything about their programme. I am a helper. I don't give my opinion on their programme – I don't have any power" (ibid.).

Solomon told me that so far both producers had mostly focused on interviews and panel discussions, although there had also been some script-based broadcasts (Solomon interview, 2007). Wakshuma told me that the format he most wished to use when dealing with specific conflicts was panel discussions with three or more people, as this would allow more viewpoints, while panel discussions with two people could degenerate into a two way blame-game, and one-on-one interviews as well as scripts would be too heavily marked by the judgements of the producer himself (Wakshuma interview, 2007). I should note that all interviewees that I talked to that touched upon

this point, both at the PO and at YDCS, emphasised that they preferred to promote panel *discussions* rather than panel *debates* in order not to aggravate differences and promote a solution-oriented process.

Wakshuma had so far interviewed an earlier General Secretary of the church, the Associate General Secretary, PO Coordinator Mamo, Education Section Head Almaz, and EECMY President Itefa on the background of the Peace Commission and PO. He had also interviewed former PO Advisor Gilchrest on the concept of peace. He had interviewed former PO Coordinator Dr. Mulletta on what it is that makes certain Western countries peaceful:

If the country has a legal constitution that fights for people's rights, that country may have peace. If the court has the upper hand and people are administrated and punished according to that court and a good constitution and good justice system, then people may have peace. And economic welfare – when individuals in that country have access to the economy, and then if the Tigray and Oromo peoples in Ethiopia have equal rights to the economy, then we may have a peaceful country. So Dr. Mulletta listed eleven points (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

Wakshuma had also conducted vox pops with ordinary people at his local church congregation on how they interpreted the concept of peace. He was in the process of setting up interviews with Orthodox, Protestant and Muslim leaders, as well as religious women on the concepts of peace and interfaith peace. He was setting up interviews with synod leaders from EECMY and a breakaway Amhara faction that had founded its own church as it was opposed to EECMY's policy of worshipping in the vernacular instead of Amharic at congregations with non-Amhara members. He was also setting up interviews with political leaders, and several had agreed to participate, including the House Speaker from EPRDF, as well as a "famous woman" who was a member of EPRDF who fought for women's rights, and representatives for several political opposition groups (Wakshuma interview, 2007). With these he wished to discuss the questions of "what is peace", and "does Ethiopia have peace? Do the people of Ethiopia have peace? What is peace for the people of [the insurgency-ridden south eastern Somali-dominated region of] Ogaden? And in Addis Ababa?" (ibid.).

Solomon mostly conducted interviews with the same people that Wakshuma interviewed. In addition he had interviewed a “peace ambassador” that was “well known in many countries” and worked for the NGO Children First, on the subjects of the meaning of peace and how to achieve peace (Solomon interview, 2007). He had also brought on a female singer and poet that had read a poem about peace, and had interviewed three children and their mothers on the meaning of peace, as well as a selection of “ordinary people” including a shoe polisher (ibid.).

#### **4.6.4 Organisational challenges in the Peace Office**

Many of the challenges in the Peace Office (PO), the initiator of the Radio Selam project, seemed to originate with the church leadership and the Peace Commission.

The PO appears to be seriously understaffed. Despite the wide range of projects under its remit, until shortly prior to my fieldwork the PO only had four staff members: a coordinator, an assistant coordinator, a secretary, and ‘one other staff member’ (Abraham, 2006: 55-56), the latter of which was perhaps former advisor Gilchrest.

This seems to be partly because the ‘scale of salary in addition to other frustrating constraints is not conducive to motivating and maintaining knowledgeable, experienced [and] committed employees’ (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 12). However, as we shall see in the sub-chapter on the individual sphere there were concerns regarding the competencies at least two people in the office that related to the leadership and nepotism in one case and possibly sectarianism in the other. Indeed, former advisor Gilchrest believed that the failure of the church leadership to provide the appropriate human resources to the PO may primarily have been due to the internal struggles for “power, resources, prestige and opportunities” that are “normal ... in most institutions” (Gilchrest interview, 2007). “There is a lot of fragmentation within the church. If you are the one that has the access to those things then you can provide for those within your circle – either related circle or social circle – and that exists in the churches guilty of what we in the West at least would see as unethical choices” (ibid.).

For his part, former coordinator Dr. Mulletta said that “Mekane Yesus is a very big church, the quality of the leadership is very hidden, and people are confined to their own little world, and to their office. In general, I can say that the Mekane Yesus leadership, especially the old leadership, well, there have been good ones and, like in any other institution, there have been weak ones, there has been corruption, there has been this and that. There has been social, economic and ethnic conflict – even in the church leadership” (Mulletta interview, 2007).

According to the PO’s 2007-2011 strategic plan document the leadership’s ‘avoidance or failure to acknowledge’ intra-EECMY conflict has hampered the PO’s work, although the strategic plan notes that ‘remarkable changes’ had taken place in this regard by 2007 (ibid.). However, as we shall see later there is no news on Radio Selam, and although we shall also see that this seems to have a lot to do with government pressure, the anonymous interviewee speculated that an additional reason might have been that the leadership-linked conflicts in the church have “had a lot of negative impact, which produced discomfort, which produces social conflicts” (Anonymous interviewee, 2007). In other words, the church leadership may be afraid that such internal conflicts, and the conflicts’ alleged links to some societal conflicts, could get exposed, compromising the positions of the leadership. Whether or not this link between leadership-conflicts and news on Radio Selam is correct, they may at least go some way to explaining the noted reluctance by the leadership to acknowledge church conflicts, hampering the PO’s work.

According to the strategic plan another ‘point of frustration’ among PO staff has been the ‘low level of autonomy / micromanaging by church leadership,’ a situation which has limited the office’s activities (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 12). Furthermore, ‘highly bureaucratic procedures of fund release’ from the leadership, even where the Peace Commission had approved the office’s budget work plan, also hampered the work of the PO (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 12).



As noted the bulk of the PO's Peace Commission consisted of 20 synod leaders. According to the anonymous interviewee these could most definitely not be relied upon to help drive projects such as Radio Selam forwards:

They listen to the reports from the [PO]. They accept and endorse any sorts of programmes and projects, and then just go away. They don't have any knowledge. [Former PO coordinator] Dr. Mulletta tried to give them training several times, but they just say "yes", listen, and then leave. So they are sort of lousy - [an] inactive group: priests, religious people, you know. [You get a] headache when you work with them. It was thought something good would come out of [the training], but nothing has come out of that. They go for coffee in the middle. They stand up instead of listening and being serious. "Oh! What's the time, let me go!" Just a few people are interested and sit there listening to the debate – after some hours you are left with four or five people out of thirty. The EECMY leadership always sticks with these old guys that are fooling themselves, drinking coffee, tired of themselves, have become traditionalists, are not exposed to anything new, are not ambitious, no vision – they are like stones (Anonymous interviewee, 2007).

For his part, Radio Selam producer Wakshuma told me that even though the church leaders and the project drivers in the PO offered to help with finding interviewees, and in some cases allowed themselves to be interviewed, he still bemoaned a lack of engagement from the leadership:

There are of course people that cooperate, especially in the Peace Office, [and] especially [former advisor] Mr. Brian [Gilchrest]. The others, maybe because of limited knowledge, time or interest – I don't know... Not as much cooperation as I expect. And among the leadership, as I see things, they don't care I conclude, because they do not ask us, "How are you doing?" Sometimes I even wonder, "Do these people even know I am doing this program?" And the individuals who I want to interview, they fear being interviewed. Always, "Please, don't ask me". Or they [delay a] long time to escape from being interviewed (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

The strategic plan notes a range of other challenges faced by the PO at office-level that paint a picture of disarray and a lack of resources (PO Strategic Plan, 2007). One area of concern is the 'inadequate provision' of office space, equipment and furniture, which is a 'persistent challenge hindering even the most basic of daily activities' (2007: 11). The office suffers from an inadequate level of research, analysis and

documentation that 'helps to prioritize work and understand how to proceed in the future and know what the office is attempting to deal with' (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 12). The plan notes that the office is hampered by poor record keeping and the loss of documents (ibid.). Furthermore, the office is not effective enough at collaborating with existing church facilities such as YDCS and the church's development wing. This has 'minimized the efficiency and impact of the PO's efforts while simultaneously unnecessarily increasing the workload upon the present PO staff' (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 10).

#### **4.6.5 Organizational challenges at YDCS**

The organizational challenges I came across related to YDCS were mainly concerned with wage levels and other issues closely linked to funding. Therefore I discuss these challenges in the sub-chapter on the economic sphere.

There were however hints at problems with internal YDCS communication flows. Production technician Alemayehu said that although he had passed a request for better equipment to the radio head, Electronic Media Division (EMD) head Taye, who was meant to pass this request on to the YDCS director, he had never received a reply (interview, 2007). From his demeanour, I guessed that this experience of non-responsiveness was not new to Alemayehu. Furthermore, EMD head Taye commented that the producers and Alemayehu would ask for unrealistically expensive things, as they did not understand the funding challenges faced by the leadership (interview, 2007). I look at these two points again from the economic angle in the sub-chapter on the economic sphere.

#### **4.7 Individual sphere**

In this chapter I first give a brief overview of the ethnic self-identification, educational and professional backgrounds, and roles in relation to Radio Selam of the six interviewees I judged to be most closely involved with project. I do this in order to make some inferences about the influence of personal characteristics on the project.

As I have already detailed the individual contributions to Radio Selam as part of my examination of hierarchy, routines and other organizational issues, I then move directly on to individual-level challenges that impede the project.

However, due to time and space limitations I do not delve deeply into the complex issues of self-identification, role orientations, conscious and subconscious attitudes, values and beliefs affecting production that media scholars (for instance Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) and others previously have looked at, and which were noted briefly in the theory chapter for perspective. I feel that this would have required a study on an in-depth anthropological level at the best of times, and especially given the hugely complex situation in Ethiopia related to identity, norms, history and other concerns. However, as also noted in the theory chapter, McQuail argues that ‘journalists and others tend, where possible, to work for organizations with compatible values’ (2005: 301), and the workplace influences professional orientations and role conceptions, while personal attitudes, values and beliefs only directly affect media content when the journalists have the power to override the organizational constraints (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996: 54-55). Thus, although we have seen that the producers have a considerable degree of freedom when it comes to producing the programmes, I think it is nevertheless fair to say that the “holistic ministry” of the church and the peacebuilding input of the PO, including advice, training and Radio Selam’s programming schedule, explain quite a lot of the actions of the producers. As we shall see, both producers furthermore have years of experience with the church on YD Radio (Solomon has many decades’ worth), and are used to working on social issue programmes within the context of church goals.

Obviously, as evangelical Christians in a very religious country, many of the interviewees likely were also influenced by religious church doctrine beyond the principle of “holistic ministry”, although I did not investigate this further in relation to the individual sphere.

In the profile section I do nevertheless touch lightly upon which personal goals three people at EECMY that I judged to be most central to the project had with Radio Selam. These three people were Gilchrest, the PO's former advisor, and Radio Selam's two producers Wakshuma and Solomon.

As mentioned I also note the ethnic identities of the interviewees, although I did not push far in trying to discover if these identities had any bearing on Radio Selam programming or other aspects of the project, as I felt this might have come across as offensive and politically risky for the interviewees (assuming that there were any harmful ethnically derived influences in the first place, which is not clear), harming my chances of further interviews, and I at any rate doubt that I would have gotten straight answers. I did ask my anonymous interviewee, who has intimate knowledge about the PO and YDCS about these issues, and he felt that ethnic issues were not a problem as regards Radio Selam's producers or the initiators of the project in the PO (Dr. Mulletta, Merga and Gilchrest), who the interviewee had high regards for, even though as we saw there is a lot of general fragmentation in the church, perhaps most related to the leadership, and later we shall see a little more of this including related to ethnicity. Furthermore, when talking to the specific interviewees just noted my impression was also that they were highly professional people with a strong commitment to Radio Selam, which sought to reach out to peoples regardless of ethnicity, religious or political affiliation (we will see indications of this in later quotes).

#### **4.7.1 Employee profiles**

First it should be noted that generally, as regards conflict resolution knowledge, the PO and producers at YDCS benefitted much from training by outside actors such as former PO coordinator Dr. Mulletta and the Swedish Christian conflict resolution organisation Life and Peace Institute, the latter of which was quite heavily involved in training members of the PO in 'conflict transformation and peace-building' (LPI, 2009: np; PO Strategic Plan, 2007; Mulletta interview, 2007).

**Brian Gilchrest** is an American Christian who was sent to Ethiopia in 1998 by the Presbyterian Church USA, who has a partnership with EECMY, to work at a rural orphanage. Here he witnessed conflicts both within and outside the church, and he returned to the US in 2003 to study for a Master's degree in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building at an Anabaptist-Mennonite university. Upon completion of the degree in 2005 he returned to Ethiopia to work in the PO as an advisor, including on the Radio Selam project. He left this position in July 2007 to take up a new position as Deputy Chief in the Democracy and Governance Office of U.S. government development agency USAID's Ethiopia Mission (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

Gilchrest explained that his goals with the interfaith programming on Radio Selam “would be to basically enlighten and highlight the values and the principles within the faith that support peaceful coexistence, non-violence, respect, tolerance, and those types of things, [while] pushing forth the notion that these principles and values are actually found in every major religion that exists” (interview, 2007). More broadly speaking, Gilchrest hoped that the project would contribute to a Diaspora-driven Ethiopian democratisation by

building cultures of peace throughout the country, and potentially reaching members of the Diaspora with some of these same positive thoughts. [...] The vision is that maybe in a while the Diaspora could be a positive contributor to the further development of positive democratisation whatever shape that takes in this country, as well as creating an environment through which true multiparty competition can happen, and a place in which the rule of law really can be followed, a place where civil society can be a very vibrant actor in everything, a place where the media has the right to exist vibrantly and openly and can step on its own tongue and say, “oops, sorry, went a bit too far on that”, but be allowed to be voicing some very alternative ideas (ibid.).

**Dr. Mulletta Hurisa**, an “Oromo” member of the church, was the co-ordinator of the PO from 2000 to 2003, overseeing its rise to the Commission level (Mulletta interview, 2007). In 2007 he was the Executive Director of the non-profit Research Centre for Civic and Human Rights Education, with its main office in Addis Ababa. He has a Bachelor's degree in Pedagogical Science Education, a Master's in Political

Science and Administrative Techniques from Sweden, and a Political Science PhD focusing on the domain of Conflict Transformation from Poland. He had previously also taught on liberal democracy and civic education for twenty years as a lecturer at Addis Ababa University. In 2006 or 2007 he established first contact with Radio Selam's funding organisation, and in 2007 he was still involved as an informal advisor to the PO and the Radio Selam producers. He would teach on issues such as "the theories and practice of peace, the church and conflict, political issues and governance and rights issues, the root causes of conflicts that we have, structural conflicts, latent conflicts and open conflicts, economic causes, peace building and of course human rights – [which] is one of the root causes of conflict in this country" (ibid.). He did not draw solely from international academic texts, but also focused on traditional Ethiopian conflict management approaches, as well as religious peace building approaches (ibid.).

***Merga Negeri***, an "Oromo" member of the church, and the PO's assistant coordinator and Inter-faith Section head until 2007, played another central role, including writing up the themes for Radio Selam's programme schedule together with Gilchrest (Merga interview, 2007; Gilchrest interview, 2007). Merga has studied under Dr. Mulletta and has himself written material on peace and justice from a Biblical perspective. Merga, Gilchrest and Dr. Mulletta worked closely together on Radio Selam and other projects until he went into political exile in Europe in the early summer of 2007. His other activities for the PO included field research and report writeups on various conflicts (ibid.). In lamenting Merga's departure, Gilchrest commented: "I think he had a lot of potential to offer this office, the church and the communities here. He really had a heart for this kind of work - that was the important thing" (interview, 2007).

***Almaz Haile Mariam***, an "Amhara" member of the church, was the PO's Education Section head at the time of interview, which mainly involved producing teaching materials, translating and editing foreign teaching materials, and conducting workshops (Almaz interview, 2007). Following the departure of the initiators of the Radio Selam project, she was also responsible for the day-to-day interaction with

YDCS, and for passing on progress reports to the external sponsor of programme production. Her background included ten years teaching English, Mathematics and Home Economics. After this she gained “a degree” in Business Administration (ibid.). In 1992 the church employed her as an accountant, and in 2004 she joined the PO as Education Section head. Here she received a few weeks’ coursing in peace building theory and practice. Almaz concluded that her peace and conflict knowledge was “not in-depth, but I have something” (ibid.).

*Wakshuma Terefe*, an “Oromo” member of the church, produced the Oromo version of Radio Selam (Wakshuma interview, 2007). He had always been a gifted student, completing his primary and secondary education with top marks during the late 1980s. At one point during his years at secondary school he was physically mistreated by the Dergue government, which made him walk on his bare knees on gravel until they started bleeding and arrested him for one night because of his membership of EECMY. In 2006 he gained a Bachelor’s degree in History from Addis Ababa University, and he also has a Diploma in English. Before working on Radio Selam he had produced social issue programmes for YD Radio “that were somewhat related to peace” for six years (ibid.). After that he had become a translator of English, Amharic and Oromo audio and video programmes for EECMY. He had also written dramas for Ethiopian Television (ETV), and acted on stage. For Radio Selam he was tutored by Dr. Mulletta. He also prepared by reading literature on the peace work of EECMY and academic literature on peace and conflict available in the PO library, and he downloaded literature from the internet on topics such as peace, justice and human rights. This would include academic literature, and non-academic literature such as a book on “politics and peace”, a United Nations report on the question of peace, as well as articles in magazines and newspapers (ibid.).

As regards his motivations for producing Radio Selam, Wakshuma expressed a wish that the project would furnish listeners with an understanding of human rights issues:

Our final goal has maybe been reached when we the people of Ethiopia know our rights. When I say 'rights' I mean what I read in books or newspapers from developed countries, because we do not respect ones rights, even individual rights, here. We do not help each other – we do not cooperate. When the people finally understand peace, and that human rights are their own. "I know my own rights that god gave me, and when I know my rights I can respect your rights". Then we can finally have justice in this country, and a good administration. This is my dream (interview, 2007).

***Solomon Gebre Sellassie***, an "Amharic" member of the church, produced the Amharic version of Radio Selam (Solomon interview, 2007). Solomon began his career as a public school teacher in 1957, teaching English, Amharic and Mathematics. He joined Yemisirach Dimts as a Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) radio producer in 1967. His very first programme had been a children's show focusing on moral development, and he had produced it continually since then. When RVOG was nationalised and became Radio Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia, he continued working for the station, producing the children's show and a show called "Guest of the Week", but now obliged to omit any religious references. Following the fall of the Dergue he resumed production work at YDCS. In addition to Radio Selam he produced three other types of programme on YD Radio: social issues, the children's show, and "listener's choice" (ibid.). For Radio Selam he was tutored by Dr. Mulletta. He also prepared by reading literature on the peace work of EECMY and academic literature on peace and conflict available in the PO library (ibid.).

Solomon's goal with Radio Selam as expressed to me reflected a focus on promoting action for peace among listeners across religious, ethnic and other divides: "everybody should know about peace, everybody should know how to make peace, and everybody should be involved [with making] peace. It is not for one religion, but for everyone" (interview, 2007).

#### **4.7.2 Challenges faced by YDCS individuals**

The constraints I discovered related to the individual sphere revolved around a lack of appropriate education and training. Wakshuma and Solomon did not have any formal or in-depth training in conflict resolution issues, and were limited to the training and



self-study noted in the last section (Wakshuma interview, 2007; Solomon interview, 2007). In addition, Tamrat points out that in 2008 (the year after my fieldwork), none of the nine YD Radio producers was properly trained in journalism, communication, or related fields, although some had participated in week-long radio production and script writing workshops. Only four had theological training (Tamrat, 2008: 60-61). An anonymous staff member interviewed by Tamrat commented:

Producers without training lack specific creative ability for real radio work and the effect is audible in often faulty programme quality. In many cases programmes leave much to be desired and lack a professional radio touch. Young producers want further education in related field, but the office gives no priority for training. Nevertheless staff members are undergoing training in various subjects, which are not related to their job, such as accounting, geography and so on, but there is no plan as to how it serves the purposes of YDCS (Staff member, 2008 in Tamrat, 2008: 61).

As we saw in the profiles sections, the Radio Selam producers indeed did not have extensive journalism or communication training, although they did have quite extensive practical experience with broadcasting, and had participated in the week-long radio production and script writing workshops (Wakshuma interview, 2007; Solomon interview, 2007). Wakshuma told me that he had hoped to study for a Master degree in Development Studies in 2006 (following completion of his degree in History), but that he had not been granted a government scholarship (Wakshuma interview, 2007).<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.7.3 Challenges faced by Peace Office individuals**

A lack of experience and education related to peace radio was also one of the underlying challenges for those in the PO. The PO's former advisor explained that no-one in the PO had any previous experience with peace radio, although the plan was to "potentially" bring in a Christian person who had a practical academic background both in journalism and peace and conflict issues in the future (Gilchrest interview, 2007). In the words of the former assistant coordinator: "We do not have many

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<sup>20</sup> In 2009 he informed me that he was studying for a Master's in Communication at the University of Greenwich in the United Kingdom via the Internet as he had two small children to take care of in Ethiopia (Wakshuma e-mail correspondence, 2009).

professionals to undertake huge activities, so we have to develop our professionalism and expertise gradually depending on the outcome of this one-year [Radio Selam] project” (Merga interview, 2007). The PO and YDCS also lacked someone who could produce Entertainment-Education dramas for Radio Selam (a common peace media programming format which as noted was mentioned in National Endowment for Democracy’s (NED) grant documents): “We didn’t think about incorporating that as a real activity within the first year. Feasibly, for getting off the ground - none of us know what we’re doing, we don’t know how it will be received by folks on the ground to begin with. [...] I would have seen that as something that we could have projected into year two” (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

At the time of my interview with Wakshuma, after about three months of production, both producers were still working on the theme “What is Peace”, the third item on the sixteen-point programme schedule covering the first two months of production. Although the planners in the PO had envisioned that each fifteen-minute programme would cover a new theme from the schedule, Wakshuma thought that many of the themes were too broad and multifaceted for such a limited time frame. While praising the conflict resolution skills of former PO advisor Gilchrest, former coordinator Dr. Mulletta and former assistant coordinator Merga, he put this inconsistency down to the lack of experience with peace broadcasting at the PO:

Even the first theme, “Peace Office Introduction”, is four shows. “What is Peace” is a vast, very vast subject. It is impossible to handle within four or five programmes. ... The schedule is only for May and June, look! The whole thing! So it is impossible to imagine. So this is it: there is even a shortage of skilled manpower in the [PO]. They don’t even know how much time is needed to communicate peace (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

Wakshuma also expressed doubts about the system set up for reporting progress to NED – an important requirement in the funding grant. He told me that PO Education Section head Almaz had visited his office asking for a report in English on what he had done so far. However, he felt that she had not asked for enough details on what they had done, making for an overly superficial report (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

At the time of interview both the advisor (Gilchrest) and assistant coordinator (Merga) had recently left the PO, as had, in 2003, the previous coordinator (Dr. Mulletta). These had all been heavily involved with initiating and shaping the Radio Selam project. The PO coordinator at the time of interview (Mamo) maintains that while this impacted the work of the PO, including the Radio Selam project, it was by no means a fatal blow: “Well, in terms of the human resources that we have it at least increased the burden on the remaining personnel in the office, [but even] though we are very few we use other resource persons in the office, in the church and also outside the church. Therefore it may have a financial constraint on the office, [but] otherwise we can manage – though there is a difference” (Mamo interview, 2007). He also maintained that although financial constraints meant that they could not fill all the wished for PO positions permanently in the short term, part-time engagements ameliorated the problem greatly (ibid.).

However, in the opinion of former advisor Gilchrest the departure of the original drivers of the Radio Selam project did pose quite a grave problem:

Now, you’re right. It’s actually very obvious. I don’t mind saying that. [...] Now the capacity of those who could actually run this programme is almost non-existent. [...] It’s a staffing issue; they don’t have someone who is equipped with the skills, the knowledge to engage this project. People are basically drowning in trying to manage the office to begin with and I think there is no attention being given to the radio programme at all. Now that puts the onus on the church to rectify that if they want, one, this project to continue and become something, two, if they want to maintain a partner in [sponsor] NED, and three, if they want to convince other partners or potential partners that they are a viable partner. I mean; there are some concerns there (interview, 2007).

According to the anonymous interviewee Gilchrest eventually said something along the lines of: ““I had better go ... and find some other work, because no one is willing to use my knowledge here”” (Gilchrest, 2007 in Anonymous interviewee, 2007). Gilchrest himself would only say that he had left for “personal reasons” (interview, 2007). The anonymous interviewee also said that former coordinator Dr. Mulletta had

left (in 2003) because the church leadership would not give him enough freedom as it was uncomfortable with his focus on civic education, which involved political science and economics and was “too sensitive, because [the ruling government “coalition”] EPRDF is strongly leftist. In EPRDF you have ultra-left – you don’t even have moderate or purely liberal thinkers” (Anonymous interviewee, 2007). Meanwhile, former assistant coordinator Merga had left the country because of government pressures related to reports he had written for the PO examining Ethiopian conflicts (Merga interview, 2007). Dr. Mulletta summarised the ramifications of the departures: “The Peace Office is now more or less getting weaker. It is breaking down I am sad to say. I worked hard to bring that Office to Commission level, and now it has gone to square one, and that makes me very sad” (Mulletta interview, 2007).

I came across allegations of nepotism and other non-skills-based appointments in the PO. The Anonymous interviewee informed me that the PO’s Education Section head, Almaz, had been promoted to her position by president Iteffa because she was his wife (interviewee, 2007). Referring to PO coordinator Mamo, the anonymous interviewee added that the church leadership “did not get the right person to lead the office” (interviewee, 2007). When the PO coordinator

was selected it was political interests and personal interests. An Ethiopian was supposed to be [coordinator], but the church employed a person based on the personal level, not the professional level. He is a lawyer by profession, but his personal competence is not so good. Within the church you have groupings. The president has a group, the general secretary another group. This grouping [is] one of these. As I said the president has also got his own wife in the church, [and this has] also not anything to do with peace because she hasn’t any knowledge. Though they are good people, they just sit there and quarrel (ibid.).

The Anonymous interviewee told me that when Gilchrest had first been invited into the PO, the president had sent his wife to the office despite objections from central persons in the PO who wanted someone employed based on competencies, and not “to get a salary only – not only on the basis of friendship. The president simply didn’t understand the effect of peace within the church and the country as a whole – so also a lack of knowledge of the person himself. [Central people] tried to talk to him, and he

said, “Okay!”, and seemed to understand, and then a few weeks later he did nothing” (Anonymous interviewee, 2007).

While discussing this theme, Gilchrest also told me that the Education Section was not sufficiently involved with Radio Selam: “In theory the Education Section should have authority, or at least direct involvement, with the peace radio project, because as of right now it’s dealing with educational themes. But it wasn’t happening, and ... it’s not [really] happening now” (interview, 2007). When I asked the Education Section head about her role in relation to the church leadership, commenting that she was the president’s wife, she said: “Oh, no, no, no! I am myself. I don’t even want to lie and say that, because I am an independent person. I am just, you know, a professional person that works for myself” (Almaz interview, 2007).

#### **4.8 Economic sphere**

As noted in the theory chapter, ownership of media organisations is highly relevant economically speaking, although ‘it is not just ownership that counts, it is a wider question of who actually pays for the media product’ (McQuail, 2005: 227). The Peace Office (PO) is funded ‘almost 100%’ by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 11). Indeed, it is ‘via this continued cooperation that our future operations are guaranteed’ (ibid.). The PO states outright that these two external organisations ‘possess a high degree of influence upon the activities of the office as they provide an overwhelming portion of the financial budget for the activities to be undertaken’ (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 10). In addition they have assisted in capacity building and project planning (ibid.).

YDCS has its own budget, which is mainly funded by Western missionary organisations. According to the Electronic Media Division (EMD) head, YD Radio broadcasting and transmission is mainly funded by Norea Mediemisjon, a Norwegian media evangelism organisation owned by Norwegian Lutheran Mission (Taye interview, 2007).

The producers of Radio Selam received 60 Birr in wages per 15-minute programme (equivalent to about \$4,7 in October 2009), while the production technician received a fixed wage of 1500 Birr per month for his work with Radio Selam and other YD Radio productions (equivalent to about \$120). The producers had access to a computer with the Cool Edit editing software. They could also use YDCS' landline to call other landlines within working hours for setting up interviews and other business. They at times had the use of YDCS' cars for transport. The production technician had access to a studio with recording and editing equipment, as well as the computer with Cool Edit (Wakshuma interview, 2007; Alemayehu interview, 2007). Everyone at YDCS had use of the YDCS premises themselves.

The U.S. NGO National Endowment for Democracy (NED), headquartered in Washington, DC, specifically financed Radio Selam's production and transmission costs, which it defined as recording, editing, script writing, presentation and administration. It granted EECMY \$31,300 earmarked dollars for the first year, lasting from February 1st 2007 to January 31st 2008 (NED Grant attachment A, 2007: 1).

EECMY's main contact person at NED noted that the \$31,300 received by the church was a "pretty typical grant size for NED", although she "would expect that that funding level would increase as our partnership level grows. For the most part we start off our funding in the range of \$25,000. We anticipate usually about a five-year relationship with each organisation, and we assume that the grants will grow in fairly small increments. NED-funding tops out around \$60,000-75,000" (Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

As also noted in the theory chapter, there is a potential imbalance between fixed costs such as land, physical premises, equipment and distribution networks, and variable costs such as materials, labour and "software", and the higher the fixed costs the more vulnerable the media organization (McQuail, 2005: 225). As regards the fixed costs of distribution networks, Radio Selam is broadcast from a non-church-owned radio

station in South Africa, and so costs are limited to the 97 USD charged for each broadcast (NED Grant, Attachment A: 1). As regards premises, while EPRDF did not return Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) broadcasting antenna for Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) or several related buildings when it came to power in 1991, with Radio Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia simply re-titled Radio Ethiopia, negotiations between LWF and the government resulted in a settlement for compensation. EPRDF compensated LWF for the nationalisation of RVOG by paying \$600,000 (although the YDCS director said this represented less than one tenth of the real property value) (Shibiru Galla interview, 2008 in Tamrat, 2008: 49). The LWF in turn granted EECMY about 2.5 million Birr (about \$400,000) of the money it had received from the government. Some of this money went towards new buildings at Mekanisa that could, among other things, accommodate the transfer of radio production from Nairobi. In addition EPRDF returned YD Radio's former studios at EECMY's city centre headquarters (Tamrat, 2008: 50). Because of this the fixed costs at YDCS seem to be limited mainly to paying for broadcasting, equipment, cars, and maintenance.

#### **4.8.1 Economic Challenges in the Peace Office and at YDCS**

Economic challenges seemed to relate to the reliance on external funding, the inability to secure internal sources of funding, and the internal utilisation of available resources.

Despite the external support, the Peace Office strategic plan notes that it still has 'limited' financial and human resources, and that 'this reality negatively impacts the ability of our office to effectively carry out its activities and thus in meeting its desired objectives' (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 11). As we saw in the sub-chapter on the organizational sphere the PO lacked office space, equipment and even sufficient furniture, while the 'scale of salary in addition to other frustrating constraints is not conducive to motivating and maintaining knowledgeable, experienced [and] committed employees' (ibid.). Furthermore, financial backing from Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has led to a 'dependency syndrome,' and the PO has not made any efforts to develop its own internal – and more 'sustainable [and] secure' – funding strategies, such as recruiting volunteers or

interns (*ibid.*). In addition, former PO advisor Gilchrest told me that the PO had lost some previous external funders, while NCA and WLF were “becoming increasingly frustrated and could possibly shift their support to other organisations that were more vibrant and functional” (interview, 2007).

One of the first challenges faced in attempting to make the Radio Selam project a reality was finding a source of the all-important funding for production and transmission, as YDCS and the PO could not afford to source this from their normal funding (Taye interview, 2007). The effort began when the church sent applications to several international organisations, including NED, headquartered in Washington, D.C. (Merga interview, 2007). In late 2006 Dr. former PO coordinator Mulletta held a meeting in Washington with two representatives of NED. He met NED’s director, who is a friend of Dr. Mulletta, and was introduced to Bronwyn Bruton, NED’s programme officer for Africa – the person who would become EECMY’s contact and monitoring person at the NGO. Dr. Mulletta presented the project, and secured a funding agreement with NED (Mulletta interview, 2007; Gilchrest interview, 2007; Merga interview, 2007).

However, as with many if not most such arrangements with external organisations, the money was provided contingent on the project fulfilling certain conditions. Radio Selam would of course have to stick to the grant promise of providing ‘alternative lenses through which identity-based conflicts in Ethiopia can be viewed and resolved’ (NED Grant, Attachment A, 2007: 1). There were many more detailed instructions too, though. I content myself with noting some main points here. NED earmarked the funds specifically for production and transmission as well as bank fees, and specific portions of the funds were earmarked for each of these categories (\$10,400 were earmarked for production costs (\$50 x 208 broadcasts), transmission received \$20,800 (\$100 x 208 broadcasts), while \$100 covered bank fees) (NED Grant, Attachment B, 2007: 1). The money was not all sent at once, but in instalments. Payment of each instalment could be suspended if reports were ‘late or unsatisfactory’ (NED Grant, Attachment C, Provision 9, 2007: 1). The funding was further conditioned on NED receiving regular



progress and financial reports. The progress reports had to include, among other things, detailed information about activities undertaken, explanations for major deviations in the amount of money used for each earmarked activity, details of any impact assessments undertaken, and recorded samples of programming (ibid.). The financial report included, among other things, an expenditure report for the period covering that particular report (NED Grant, Attachment C, Provision 9, 2007: 2). In addition EECMY had to 'consult regularly with the Endowment and notify the Endowment promptly of any significant problems or changes that could affect the successful implementation of project activities. [...] Endowment staff or representatives may make on-site visits to observe project implementation and to verify information provided in the periodic reports submitted by the Grantee' (ibid.).

Such visits were undertaken several times by EECMY's main contact person at NED, Bronwyn Bruton:

I've been getting to Ethiopia three to four times a year. I think it's a fairly unusual situation that donors are able to go to the field that often, but it allows us to have a pretty much very hands on relationship with the organisation. And of course we also have quarterly reports that we request as well, but you know, to be honest reports are not a very good way of monitoring grants. [...] Mainly because we work with very nascent NGOs typically, our requirements are not very stringent, [so] we do depend on that sort of daily or at least quarterly interaction. We communicate a lot by e-mail and phone, and then as often as possible we are just visiting them face-to-face in the field (Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

Bruton noted that her impression was that the project was "going really well" (Bruton telephone interview, 2007). However, she warned that while Radio Selam had done a good job with peace education, "to be honest with you, I would like in the future for them to get into more of the monitoring and recording aspects of human rights work", although she said she would "find it difficult" to make it a precondition given the challenging political situation in Ethiopia (ibid.).

Bruton told me that the restrictive political landscape had made it easier for EECMY to get funding from NED. The NGO seldom funds religious organisations due to a United States legal ban on the funding of religious proselytizing, and is even more careful when it comes to funding religious radio, as it would “strictly speaking” be illegal for any radio equipment bought with such funding to be used for religious programming at any time (Bruton telephone interview, 2007). She says that the decision to fund Radio Selam

comes down a little bit to the difficulty we’ve had in finding groups to work with in Ethiopia, [so] we’ve been a lot more flexible than we would normally be. It’s been very difficult to find any organisations, really, that are willing to work with American democracy funding. After a concentrated effort we’re up to about twelve groups now, but for years we’ve only had about three groups at a time in Ethiopia. We were particularly excited about Radio Selam because its very difficult to do any kind of media work in Ethiopia, and the fact that they had an existing radio license and an ability to broadcast seemed like an unbelievably fortuitous circumstance for us, so we pretty much jumped on it as soon as we found out about it. I’m really surprised actually that they haven’t been shut down. We’ll see how long it keeps up! (ibid.).

The United States’ ban on support for religious proselytizing did however mean that Bruton made it clear to the church that Radio Selam had to avoid this, “and they were fine with it. As far as I know they haven’t done anything, and if they have I really wouldn’t want to know about it!” (Bruton telephone interview, 2007). “I didn’t put a lot of restrictions on them. Again, to be really, really honest, my expectation was that they would be shut down in very short order, so I’ve been kind of surprised that the project’s been going on for as long as it has” (ibid.). Both the advisor in the PO, who made the programme schedule, and the producers told me that they abided by the ban on proselytizing (Gilchrest interview, 2007; Wakshuma interview, 2007; Solomon interview, 2007).

As noted previously there were problems with follow-up on the part of the PO even very early in the project phase due to the departure of key persons and a general lack of staff and resources. Already at this stage Gilchrest warned that in order to continue receiving funding from NED, the church would have to invest more in financial and

material resources at the PO and YDCS: “If you do not produce even a minimum of what the programme said it would produce by such a date, then what would be the reason [for NED] to continue?” (interview, 2007). This argument seems to have been prescient given that NED terminated funding after the first year, despite the fact that the PO’s strategy plan envisioned the project stretching beyond 2011 and that NED itself had hoped to fund the project for about five years (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 21; Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

The termination of NED’s funding spelled the end for Radio Selam. What happened?

The problem does not seem to have been weaknesses in the actual preparations for or production of Radio Selam. Furthermore, Bruton was aware of the delays that had occurred in the project at the time of interview due to negotiations with Trans World Radio, but did not express much concern: “It was definitely a very late start, but you know to be honest not unexpectedly. When we work with radio programmes in Africa these delays are really common. In fact, I tend to just expect them, and get really surprised when things go off on time” (Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

Bruton had also not been fazed by the departure of key staff: “You know, again it’s the kind of thing you expect to see because of the difficulty of the political environment. You kind of expect that you’re going to have these problems of frequent turnover of staff” (Bruton telephone interview, 2007). However, in the end the departure of staff does seem to have been the decisive factor in NED’s decision due to its knock-on effects on PO capabilities. Earlier we saw that Wakshuma had concerns with the reporting procedure for NED, which was dependent on the PO Education Section head, who in turn was criticised for lacking the relevant skills and motivation (and for being appointed through nepotism). We also saw that similar criticisms were levelled against PO coordinator Mamo. It appears that this lack of PO engagement may have been fatal. Bruton explained the decision to me in an e-mail in 2009: ‘The program suffered from the forced departure of key staff, and we developed a problem with reporting, which in turn prevented timely draw downs, etc. As to whether the grant can

be renewed, I certainly hope so - given the rare ability of Mekane Yesus to actually broadcast peace messages in Ethiopia, it would be crazy not to do everything possible to support the program' (e-mail correspondence, 2009). Although I did not have time to investigate this issue further, producer Wakshuma, in another e-mail to me in 2009, also noted that 'I think [that NED] want to come back to commence it again' (Wakshuma e-mail correspondence, 2009). In other words, the grant may be renewed, but presumably this would require some organizational and personnel improvements in the PO.

On a slightly different note, the PO's reliance on NED for Radio Selam contributed to the office's decision not to convene pre-programme grassroots focus groups to aid in tailoring the programming for local needs and sensibilities. According to former advisor Gilchrest, protracted negotiations with Trans World Radio had made the PO nervous that further delays would antagonise NED: "We'd already told our supporters NED that, "Ok, here's the stuff we're going to put out", in basic themes, and, "Here's how many a week", "Here's the time frames", and, "Here's when we're getting started". Now, continually we're going back, at least twice before I left, to say that, "Ok, there's been some changes to everything. With the exception of themes, our times and dates and beginning are being muddled with". So we wanted to get started" (interview, 2007). He added that he was unsure if focus groups were necessary anyway:

I'd heard from people in the leadership at YDCS that in their other programming listeners wrote in, [and] that listeners actually visited their offices and talked to them about programming. I was saying, 'Based on that experience, why is it ill-conceived to think that we'll get the same feedback on these programmes, and maybe even more, because some of the stuff we're putting out there might be a bit "eeeh" [(shocking)] for some people. So great, let people send back whatever they have on that and we can incorporate that into the thinking of how to push forward'. ... I mean, in the future maybe it will be deemed that focus groups are a good way to go, but you know, since the majority of those who are listening are not going to be based in Addis, then those focus groups would have to be wherever some large concentrations of listeners may be found (Gilchrest interview, 2007).

However, given the heavy focus of much (although not all) development media research on the need for a thorough understanding of local needs and local involvement through participatory projects,<sup>21</sup> this view is not altogether unproblematic. Tamrat writes that the heavy reliance on voluntary feedback from listeners in the form of letters leaves much to be desired, while proactive audience needs and response research is generally not carried out by those working on YD Radio due to a lack of funds (2008: 60). An anonymous producer told him: "It is hard to measure listeners' response. Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. Most of our listeners are in rural areas; many who listen to radio cannot read or write and cannot send letters. Moreover, research is expensive. Because of costs, YDCS do little audience research and rely on letters from listeners to determine the impact of its broadcasts" (Producer (B), 2008 in Tamrat, 2008: 60). Radio Selam's reliance mainly on letters from the few that were willing and able to send them threatened to weaken the relevance of programming for the listeners given that they are a rather unambitious tool of measurement. Also, even though most of those working on the Radio Selam are Ethiopians, they come from a limited number of communities and it is not clear that they have a strong understanding of the ways and needs of all the communities targeted by the programming, while the rather general nature of the programming is in itself another potential obstacle to connecting with specific locales and cultures (of which there are many in Ethiopia).

Beyond the challenges faced by the reliance on NED (and, in the latter case, funding for needs research), the producers and production technician at YDCS felt hampered by an inadequate provision of resources not provided for by the grant. The producers were particularly unhappy about their wage levels. Wakshuma complained:

For writing, voicing, mixing and sending to South Africa they pay me 60 Birr – six-oh Birr – very small, very small! So I don't know. I have told them already that if it continues like that I can't [go on]. I love to do this work, but this is very... They don't know about this work. Only the person who works on the radio station knows how difficult this is. They take it as just a simple thing, as if

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<sup>21</sup> See for instance Morris (2005).

I simply read something and then voice it. So this is very difficult. Even I can't manage with this money, I even can't cover my mobile [telephone] costs. [The Electronic Media Division head] presented my request to the management staff, and they said, "No, continue with this for a while". Do you know when the 60 Birr for a 15-minute programme was decided? Fourteen years ago! (interview, 2007).

When I asked Solomon if he thought 60 Birr was enough, he expressed similar sentiments: "No, it is not sufficient. It is *not* sufficient. It's a very difficult programme. We have to run here and there – it takes a long time to even get one percent [of the people] to interview. It is a headache. I'm not even happy, because I worked for the former Yemisirach Dimts, I worked for the government after it was nationalised, and I've also produced programmes for Save the Children Norway, and these all paid me more" (interview, 2007).

As noted previously, NED provided \$50 dollars per broadcast for production, defined as recording, editing, script writing and presentation, all tasks carried out by the producers and production technician, and administration costs, which were the duty of the leadership. Nevertheless the producers received 60 Birr, less than \$5, per programme, and this came from YDCS' regular budget, not from NED. The production technician got a fixed monthly wage of 1500 Birr for all his work with YD Radio that is also drawn from the regular budget (and he seemed satisfied with this). It thus appears as if all of NED's production and administration funding was swallowed by the latter, or perhaps by other non-production expenses that I did not uncover.

Even though the NED grant provided for production costs, PO Education Section head Almaz said that she was unsure if the Peace Commission would release more money for wages for the producers, blaming this on the fact that church did not have a lot of money in general:

True, 60 birr [in wages] is not enough – you have to plan the programme, you have to prepare materials, all this, so that's not enough. But at the same time this is educational work and we have to sacrifice. All of us working for this church, we don't really take that [big an] amount of money. As you know this

church is a non-profit organisation. The [PC] decides on the release of money here [in the PO]. So in this office or in that office – wherever you go in the church it has to go through a process. The money part is especially serious – very serious (Almaz interview, 2007).

The EMD head said that 60 Birr “is the amount we have for such kinds of programmes. We even pay 60 Birr for 30-minute programmes by freelancers, but for [the producers] we pay 60 Birr for 15 minutes – can you see the difference? What we say is that we pay a fair amount of money for the producers. There are so many people who are asking to do it for 60 Birr. We can’t add anything extra unless we get extra money from the [PO]” (Alemayehu interview, 2007).

Wages were not the only variable costs that YDCS had problems with. The landline telephones at YDCS were blocked for calls to mobile telephones and for all calls outside normal working hours. This presented a challenge for the producers whenever they needed to get in touch with people who only had a mobile or who were unavailable inside working hours. Solomon told me he often had to call from home, while Wakshuma had to call from his personal mobile. Neither of the producers received compensation for the extra costs incurred in this regard, aggravating the problems related to what they saw as too low wages (Wakshuma interview, 2007; Solomon interview, 2007).

Furthermore, the producers would not get paid overtime if they had to conduct interviews outside working hours: “If our guest wants to be interviewed on Sunday, we have to tell [the YDCS leadership] and overtime will be paid for the production technician, but not for Wakshuma and Solomon. We have to be [very careful with] our schedule in order not to get any difficulty with our interview. If the person says, “Well, this is the day I want to be interviewed”, then I have to obey him, otherwise I wouldn’t get the interview, and [the leaders] should know this. They shouldn’t just say, “No, you shouldn’t do”” (Solomon interview, 2007).

Fixed costs related to equipment were also somewhat of a problem. Production technician Alemayehu complained that he lacked sufficient equipment, including omnidirectional microphones, CD-players and a dedicated table where interviewees could sit (now he had to move a table from the recording and editing room into the studio) (interview, 2007). He had requested a new table and microphones from the EMD head, who was meant to pass on such requests to the YDCS director. However, he had received no response (interview, 2007).

EMD head Taye first argued that the unidirectional microphones were good enough, before going on to say that they could not afford omnidirectional microphones, but that YDCS would “try our best” to buy some if they got more money in the future (interview, 2007). He added that the producers and production technician “don’t know where this budget comes from, and they ask for very expensive things. The people who are working ask so many things, but they don’t know the problems behind” (ibid.).

Despite the drawbacks and limitations to external funding, this situation is not likely to change at least in the near- to medium-term. When discussing the PO’s reliance on foreign funding, former assistant coordinator Merga, whose Bachelor thesis dealt with the issue of church self-reliance, explained that breaking the reliance depends “on strengthening our synods, and it also depends on the status of Mekane Yesus at large. If Mekane Yesus becomes self-reliant, [then] the [PO] as part of the Church can get some funding from headquarters. And if the synods believe that the [PO] belongs to them, then they can support it” (Merga interview, 2007). Merga adds that “the funding coming from external sources is decreasing year for year for different reasons, such as the fact that membership in European churches is decreasing, and that they are shifting their partnerships to other countries such as those in Latin America. So it is a must that Mekane Yesus works to become self-reliant” (ibid.). He told me that internal revenues are increasing, and include money provided to synods by parishes that receive money from their congregations, income from buildings that the church rents out in Addis Ababa, income from students at the church’s Theological Seminary, and from



bookstores that YDCS has been opening up in different parts of the country (ibid.). However, the PO's former coordinator told me that as regards increasing congregation support, it "will take a hell of a lot of years. Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries. The church members are dying of hunger. How can they afford to support [the church]? The contribution is there, but it is very meagre, and does not go beyond the church central leadership office, and even they sometimes ask for [external] money" (Mulletta interview, 2007).

In addition, YDCS does not receive any funding from advertising. According to the anonymous interviewee, this brings us back to the staffing challenges faced by the church: "Well, you need skills for that also. You need vision, you need skill, and you need to be active. Yes, a lack of initiative and creativity" (2007). Furthermore, there are no direct subsidies provided by the government (ibid.).

#### **4.9 Political sphere**

We have already looked at the government's approach to politics and how it treats the media sphere, and saw that although there are severe restrictions, they are not complete and there is some limited space for speech. When it comes to EPRDF's attitude to religions, the United States State Department notes that the 'Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion' (US SD Religious Freedom, 2009: np).

My interviewees and literary sources all agreed that EECMY-government relations have improved under EPRDF. Freedom of speech and the press has improved when compared to the dismal situation particularly during the Dergue (although Ethiopia still has one of the most restrictive media environments in the world), and there is generally less harassment of the church. Furthermore, EPRDF has made a break with Dergue policies for instance by allowing organizations to hire their own personnel, even if there are some policies, rules and procedures to follow. During the Dergue all job hirings had to go via government 'work offices' (Semaw & Mamman, 2004: 116).

As we saw, EPRDF also compensated Lutheran World Federation somewhat for the nationalisation of Radio Voice of the Gospel, and some of this money ultimately went to YDCS, while the government also returned the church's old studios. Furthermore, it did not stop the church from broadcasting Radio Selam during its year of existence, and had allowed the church to focus on some development issues with YD Radio for years.

In the theory chapter I presented McQuail's lists of laws intended to help the media and ensure that the media operates responsibly, for instance in the sense of respecting rights, protecting the essential interests of the state including the prevention of public harm, and promoting freedom (2005: 234). However, in Ethiopia the government also uses various laws, along with a number of other actions, to interfere with the operation of the church in ways that may not be so beneficial to its general operations and functioning.

#### **4.9.1 Political Challenges for the Peace Office and YDCS**

EPRDF has presented EECMY's operations with a long range of challenges, including a hampering of its general activities. I limit myself to four examples here. Firstly, it forced the church to register anew as a religious organisation after four decades as an official church (Semaw & Mamman, 2004: 116). Like NGOs, religious institutions now have to reregister every three years. Ethiopian Human Rights Council, the country's biggest independent human rights NGO, reportedly said that this practice reflected 'a lack of progress or improvement in the Government's treatment of "newer religions," specifically Protestant churches' (US SD Religious Freedom, 2008: np). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church never reregistered with the government, and the main Islamic organisation, the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, registered once in the late 1990s and never again (ibid.). Secondly, the government refuses to issue visas to religious organisations unless they are associated with the organisations' development wings, which must be registered as NGOs. Furthermore, the visa policy 'was not consistently enforced for Muslims or Orthodox Christians', but only for

Protestants and other groups (ibid.). Thirdly, in 2007 EECMY's NGO-registered development wing reported that new, stricter operating requirements for NGOs meant that its 53 health centres faced the threat of closure (EECMY Profile, 2007: 9). Fourthly, some Muslim and Protestant groups, including EECMY, complained that local officials would sometimes discriminate against them (as opposed to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church) when they sought land for churches, mosques and cemeteries (US SD Religious Freedom, 2008: np; Dr. Mulletta interview, 2007).

While these actions are not directly related to the operation of Radio Selam, they give the impression of a government which does not seem particularly concerned with the welfare of the church, and which hampers and discriminates against it in some cases. Such an attitude is hardly conducive to a supportive operating environment for Radio Selam.

Moving on to the Peace Office (PO) level, the anonymous interviewee provides a particularly serious allegation of governmental interference:

Hundreds of [pieces of peace and conflict] literature has been snatched – they couldn't even take care of that at Mekane Yesus. They put [literature] in their storage room and it was snatched. There are also of course people that are against this work in the government, sending their people [to work] from inside and to smuggle [literature] out. I heard that some books have been burned. That person that has done that has left Mekane Yesus. He was a security officer, internal police undercover, and he was working for the [PO] for some time, so a lot has been destroyed (2007).

The government could also pressure people into exile. At the time of interview the PO's former assistant coordinator Merga was applying for political asylum (later granted for him and his family) in Europe due to pressure from the government over his reporting and advocacy work for the PO. He told me that the office had to be very careful when dealing with the subject of conflict (with obvious implications for Radio Selam):

We have limitations at the church as a civil society organisation. Sometimes we are not even allowed to prepare a report for those who fund our projects. You cannot know how the government is going to interpret what you do. For example, I was one of the people trying to do research in the pastoralist areas. When you do research, and when you find the realities, it is very difficult to write down the findings because the people at the grassroots level speak the truth, the reality, of the root causes of the conflicts among the different ethnic groups or pastoralists. The root causes go back to the government. If you write that down, if you write the findings of your research, you will be in trouble. So you have to struggle with yourself on how to put it into words so that it may not disappoint or provoke the government or the [local] ethnic government (Merga interview, 2007).

He added that the Peace Commission sometimes gets “directions” from EPRDF:

We have to discuss with the government, and if the government does not allow you to [work on] some of the sensitive issues, then you have to avoid that. At the Peace Commission level of EECMY there are principles as to what the church should do and should not get involved in. For example, when there are serious issues at national level, religious leaders in general get together and discuss, and if needed go to the Prime Minister’s office and get directions from him. Sometimes the Peace Commission gives some directives as to what we in the Peace Office should do and not do, because the Peace Commission is the higher body that has some connection with government officials (Merga interview, 2007).

This clearly limits the options for Radio Selam programming, although as we shall see below the producers have found ways to avoid overly provoking the government. When I told EECMY’s president that I believed he sometimes had meetings with the government, he said: “We have meetings with people from other religious organisations. Whenever we have an issue we visit the government officials [to discuss] areas of concern of the country, especially in the areas of peace within the country as well as peace across the borders of the country. Those are the kinds of meetings we have with the officials” (Itefa interview, 2007). The anonymous interviewee told me that the president “doesn’t distance himself from the government. That is one of the strategies he has. But he [is not] in the pocket of the Prime Minister. Therefore he is between two rivers. He tries to keep neutral while at the same time keeping in touch with the government. There is of course pressure. The government of

course wants Mekane Yesus to be a follower of the Prime Minister's party, and there are some followers [of EPRDF] in Mekane Yesus, but they are few I think" (2007).

In 2009 the Indian Ocean Newsletter reported that the president was

Relieved of his functions at the end of January and even suspended from the priesthood by a committee of pastors close to the EPRDF. This was partly the result of the vindictiveness of Oromo pastors from Wollega who reproach him of being married to an Amhara woman who has borne him three children. It is also because of the role he plays in a group of Oromo dignitaries that recently tried to mediate between the EPRDF and the [Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)]. Whereas Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had publicly claimed that there had been no negotiation with the OLF, Pastor Itafa Gobana stated in the press and on Ethiopian TV that he was one of the mediators in the beginnings of a negotiation which gave rise to preliminary talks. According to him, certain OLF leaders had been prepared to enter into serious negotiations, but internal dissension within the movement had brought the attempt to a halt. These words were clearly not to Meles Zenawi's liking. From the time he said them, his days at the head of the EECMY were numbered. He was finally relieved of his post for getting "involved in politics" (TION, 2009: np).

While none of this directly relates to Radio Selam, it shows that Radio Selam was part of an organisation whose leader has allegedly been unseated by the government via allies in the church, and that the church leader dabbled in aiding negotiations between the government and its domestic archenemy, a rebel group representing an ethnic group that is also very close to the church. Although this particular incident happened after Radio Selam had finished, it highlights the sensitive context related to relations with the government and the church's links to Oromo nationalism that Radio Selam had to operate within, placing it in a potentially even more delicate position than it was facing anyway due to its focus on the already highly sensitive issue of conflict.

In addition, as with the internal political allegiances, the internal ethnic tensions noted in the report raise serious questions about the organizational coherence of EECMY, including related to employment policies and internal communication and cooperation. What is clear from the report is that the PO's Education Section head Almaz, the ex-president's wife that was in charge of following up YDCS as regards Radio Selam,

faces powerful enemies among some Oromo pastors from Wollega, the Oromo heartland of EECMY, who do not seem to like the fact that she is Amharic. Furthermore, EECMY's synod leaders (who are pastors as were those that unseated him) make up the bulk of the Peace Commission (PC), which decides on funding and priorities for the PO, including in relation to PO initiatives such as Radio Selam. Might the PO and YDCS also be affected by these tensions? We have already seen that there is a history of conflict at the EECMY leadership levels, and that this affects the internal operation of the PO. Although I did not look more closely into these issues, they certainly deserve further consideration elsewhere.

I now turn to Yemisirach Dimts Communications Services (YDCS). The government does not provide EECMY or YDCS with any media subsidies: "In fact, the government would be happy to get rid of [YD Radio and Radio Selam]. If Mekane Yesus' mass media [efforts were provided] as an instrument of the government, then they would give millions, Mekane Yesus would lose its standing around the country, and it would break into pieces" (Anonymous interviewee, 2007).

Although YDCS had planned to conduct FM broadcasting from Ethiopia upon its return to the country (Taye, 2008 in Tamrat, 2008: 59), EPRDF has never allowed this and made it officially illegal with a 1999 media proclamation banning broadcasts by foreigners and religious and political organisations. The information and communication officer at the government controlled Ethiopian Broadcast Authority said: "Generally, the government's concern for the prohibition of [religious and political broadcasting] is a concern that the religious and political organisations cannot use their broadcasting service objectively. Moreover, the Ethiopian government has not seen any contribution of religious broadcasting for the development of the country. The present Ethiopian government is committed to its development goal but religious organisations cannot do that" (Leulseged Wolde Hanna in Tamrat, 2008: 58).

Interestingly however, the government does not prevent EECMY from producing in Ethiopia and broadcasting into the country from abroad. The prohibition on religious

broadcasting meant that Radio Selam's programmes had to be sent by CD-ROM to Trans World Radio (TWR) in South Africa, which would charge \$97 per programme broadcast (NED Grant, Attachment A: 1). As TRW requires that all programmes are sent to them two to three months in advance of broadcasting, the church's dependence on an external broadcaster also caused long delays, making it impossible to provide updated news or other urgent information: "News should be fresh, but today's programme was sent to South Africa two months ago. You know the purpose of news. If I broadcast it two months later, then what is the gift to the listeners? They have already heard it other places" (Solomon interview, 2007; Tamrat, 2008: 50). The ban also made it impossible to conduct live phone-in programmes (Solomon interview, 2007). Wakshuma noted that the government had also rejected EECMY's application to install a satellite transmitter to transfer YD Radio's programmes more quickly (interview, 2007).

The PO and YDCS had to compromise on the length of programming as TWR had a packed programming schedule involving many other radio producers. Although the planners had intended to produce one hour of programming in each language per week, this had to be shortened to thirty minutes after negotiations with TWR (Gilchrest interview, 2007) (although it is not clear to me if the church would have been able to get sufficient funding for longer than 30 minutes). Negotiations with TWR over this even delayed the initial implementation of the project. Although broadcasting was meant to begin in February 2007, negotiations over the number and length of broadcasting slots TWR was willing to lease to EECMY delayed the start of production until May (NED Grant Attachment A, 2007: 1; Gilchrest interview, 2007; Wakshuma interview, 2007).

Furthermore, the Short Wave (SW) signal left a lot to be desired, with both producer Solomon and production technician Alemayehu reporting that reception of the programme was at times quite bad in Addis Ababa and its environs. This had not been a problem when Lutheran World Federation broadcast Radio Voice of the Gospel from near Addis, and it was not a problem for the government radio station that now used

that antenna. Alemayehu believed that the poor signal was caused by electromagnetic interference from electrical networks in the city (power lines, etc), and both he and Solomon said that the signal was better in rural areas (Alemayehu interview, 2007; Solomon interview, 2007).

I found some evidence of direct government interference with the radio work of Radio Selam's Oromo producer Wakshuma seemingly due to the government's Oromo fears. However, even though he had produced three months worth of programming at the time of interview, he had not so far experienced any direct government pressure in connection with Radio Selam, but rather in connection with his earlier work on social programming for YD Radio. He told me of an incident two years previously where he was contacted by a government security operative because, the operative said, "People are telling me that you have been talking about this government and about OLF and about [an EPRDF party representing Oromos called] OPDO" (government operative, 2005 in Wakshuma interview, 2007). The operative had also been informed that Wakshuma had criticised his university history professors in class for exclusively focusing on and glorifying historical events from a northern Ethiopian highlander perspective while ignoring or distorting the history of Oromos. He was forced to meet the operative for two months of "discussions", and finally rejected the operative's suggestions that he should join EPRDF by telling the operative that, "I am a person working at a religious radio station, so I do not side with any part. As an Ethiopian I can favour one party, but not in this way" (Wakshuma, 2005 in Wakshuma interview, 2007). One month later he was forced to have another month of "discussions" with another operative who accused him of calling the government corrupt because he had participated in a church theatre play that criticised economic corruption in society (Wakshuma interview, 2007).

As with workers at other media organisations, the YD Radio producers practiced self-censorship. This was particularly true for Radio Selam, which dealt with highly sensitive issues. Wakshuma and Solomon were particularly careful not to report conflict specifics when dealing with non-church conflicts. They would, for instance,



never report on troop movements or attacks on or by rebel groups such as OLF, and even resource and religious conflicts that did not involve direct conflict with the state were considered highly sensitive. As such, “straight news” was generally off the agenda except where it might crop up in panel discussions between political and religious leaders, academics, elders, and others, and had thus not been brought up or discussed by the producers. In their prepared scripts and monologues the producers would focus more on peace education. The PO’s former assistant coordinator commented:

For the time being we are not going to use straight news, because conflicts are very sensitive in Ethiopia. Sometimes even the government media does not do that. ... It depends on the nature of the conflict. If it is not church related, if it is ethnic or pastoralist or religious conflict, it is very sensitive, so we [do not] report it as news (Merga interview, 2007).

Dr. Mulletta said that although Radio Selam could not focus on flashing news as it “would backfire on the church as a whole politically speaking”, it was possible to discuss politics by focusing on ways to reach a consensus between the conflicting parties in question, instead of accusing one or the other (interview, 2007).

Wakshuma also emphasized that the intention was to avoid arguments in favour of constructive discussions wherever possible. However, where this was not possible he would let the most sensitive and contentious issues be brought up by the interviewees themselves. “I have to be careful, of course, but I’m not worried. Let them argue with each other! I broadcast what they say – from the government side or from the opposition side, so maybe they get my balanced point” (interview, 2007). Furthermore, he would prevent interviewees from delivering serious accusations unless they justified them well: “If it is simply blaming the others, I do not broadcast it. If he has a rational idea, I may accept that. If they have a logical point I call EPRDF and say what the opposition have said and [ask for a reply]. I will not broadcast only one individual or party, because if I side with one party and they say something that is negative about the other, it is a big problem for me. The [opposition] person can say whatever he likes, but I will cross check it” (ibid.). He added: “By the way, I accumulate all the

interviews. I do not erase any; because I expect that one day this government may come and ask me things” (ibid.).

Wakshuma also told me that people in the PC (who as we saw above sometimes meet the government) had asked him not to focus on politics at all:

Radio Selam of course addresses political issues. Even the majority of programmes on Radio Selam [deal with] politics I think, because most of the conflict issues are politicized. But not specific events and news, because [on one Radio Selam programme] I asked these individuals in the Peace Commission: “Why are there political conflicts in this country? Why do different groups like OLF and ONLF fight for their rights?” They said: “Why should you [delve into] this? You will be imprisoned and the organization will be closed. You should not put your hands in such politics”” (2007 in Wakshuma interview, 2007).

In a comment that revealed his dedication to Oromo rights of representation, Wakshuma added: “What makes OLF fight? Because the Oromos are considered second-class citizens in this country. This should be resolved. When the government sits and listens to these questions – what OLF asks for and what Oromos ask for – when I’ve got people’s attention and the government comes and sits around the table with groups like OLF and others and discusses these issues, this war can be over” (interview, 2007). In an action that reflected the producers’ relative freedom from constraints from the church leadership, Wakshuma produced the programme anyway and sent it to South Africa as it focused on broad issues and not on specific news items. “You can mention specific groups, just not specific events. You can talk generally about ONLF, OLF, the Afar guerrillas or whatever, just not go and say, “today this happened” and so on”, he explained (interview, 2007).

Furthermore, he said that a listener had called and asked if he would support OLF or EPRDF on Radio Selam. Wakshuma had replied: “No, I do not support either on this Radio Selam. I simply raise the issues. It is not me who judges. We bring the base matters; the matters which make them fight each other” (Wakshuma, 2007 in Wakshuma interview, 2007). The caller had asked: “Does that mean that you will not

be imprisoned?” (caller, 2007 in Wakshuma interview, 2007). Wakshuma answered: “No, I do not support OLF – if I support OLF then of course the government can imprison me. If I support EPRDF, of course OLF may say, “Oh, you will be killed”. Secretly they may say that, because sometimes I get e-mails from OLF people, so they can scare me of course. But I only write and speak and invite people to speak on the logical, the rational ideas, not on supporting or not supporting” (interview, 2007). As this last comment revealed, OLF is a political sphere force other than the government that also affects Radio Selam by making the producers (at least Wakshuma) more careful about what they report.

Electronic Media Division head Taye told me that he would never let any Radio Selam programmes be sent to South Africa for broadcasting before he had listened to them:

No, no, no. No way. They bring it here, and then I monitor it, and if there are any risky sayings or words we edit them. Sometimes there are sensitive interviews – what people say. We don’t only interview Christians, but also those who are not Christians; we interview those who are in higher positions in the government, and so on. If there is anything that will [cause us to] clash with the government, we edit it out. Otherwise it is not good for the existence of the church. Even in spiritual programmes people [can] innocently say something. We don’t broadcast anything against the government, but we teach them what they should do in the right way (Taye interview, 2007).

Bronwyn Bruton, EECMY’s contact person at NED, Radio Selam’s main sponsor, said that she had been

really surprised by the depth of the coverage that they have been able to achieve, and the bluntness of some of the programming that they have done. I think that the reasons that they have been able to get away with it is that it is really focused on peace education, which is something that the government doesn’t seem to be too uncomfortable with. I think when you start doing actual human rights reporting of the violations that have occurred it gets a lot harder. In general, the church seems to be more able, in Ethiopia, to broach these subjects than just individual NGOs. They have a very large constituency and they are very high profile, so sometimes they can get away with doing things that you just wouldn’t expect even a group like [major Ethiopian organisation Ethiopian Human Rights Council] to get away with (Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

However, as noted previously she doubted that Radio Selam would be able to meet her objective of engaging in direct human rights reporting (Bruton telephone interview, 2007).

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

I have primarily looked at how Radio Selam, an Ethiopian peace radio programme run by the local Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), might have been constrained by four spheres of influence. The spheres I looked at encapsulated certain organizational, individual, economic and political influences. Given my number of corroborating sources and the similarities to research presented in the theory chapter, I feel I have shown that it is plausible that all four spheres generally influence and also constrain the project.

In this chapter I will present a summary of the findings with conclusions for each sphere of hypothesized influence. In addition I will note some positive aspects of the project, and consider whether or not the findings can be generalized to other cases.

### **5.2 Organizational sphere**

At the time that I was conducting my fieldwork, the Peace Office (PO) seemed to have recently declined to a somewhat dysfunctional state. There had been the departure of personnel key to both Radio Selam and the office as a whole, and this combined with a host of other problems led the former advisor and coordinator to conclude that the office was “breaking down”, in the words of the former coordinator. Furthermore, as the people in the PO were “basically drowning” in trying to manage the office at all, their capacity to follow up Radio Selam was “almost non-existent” in the words of the former advisor.

I feel that one of the most central issues highlighted by my examination of the PO is the importance of a professional and engaged leadership, as even though they allowed Radio Selam to ahead, it seems plausible that many of the challenges facing the project were linked to the church’s General Office and the Peace Commission. It was the

president of the church who employed his own wife as Education Section head and another ally as coordinator despite the misgivings of others who felt that they were unqualified. The leadership, sometimes caught up in their own internal ethnic, social and economic conflicts, were accused by the PO's own strategic plan document of hampering the office by not engaging sufficiently with it (although things had recently improved), and this seemed to extend to Radio Selam, where two interviewees as noted said that the leadership was failing to create a PO staff-situation which could sustain the project, while one of the producers rhetorically wondered if the leadership even was aware that he was doing the show. There was even speculation that they were eager to avoid news on the programme that might reveal links between the leadership conflicts and church conflicts in the field. Internal ethnic conflict linked to the leadership also appeared to be capable of causing staffing problems, as we saw that the church president was removed in 2009 partly because some Oromo synod leaders were angry that he was married to an Amhara woman (who had been responsible for following up Radio Selam in the PO during my fieldwork).

The leadership was also accused of micromanaging the PO and of highly bureaucratic procedures of fund release, while the important Peace Commission was headed by the same president and dominated by 20 synod leaders branded uninterested at best and incompetent at worst. Furthermore, some of these synod leaders displayed their lack of engagement with and understanding of the project when a group of them asked Radio Selam producer Wakshuma to drop political programming when he interviewed them for Radio Selam even though he was merely focusing on peace education.

Furthermore, one of the key persons for Radio Selam that quit the PO, advisor Gilchrest, was said to have left because he felt that no-one was using his skills, which seems to indict either the leadership or the remaining PO staff or both, and the former coordinator that left in 2003, Dr. Mulletta, had done so because of misgivings by a leadership afraid he would get the church into trouble with the government.

The PO also suffered from a lack of office space, equipment and even furniture, and other issues that gave the impression of a highly problematic situation, including dysfunctional routines. While some of these were undoubtedly linked to a lack of funding, a lack of leadership engagement and the appointment of inappropriate staff plausibly also explain much.

Given all of this, I even feel that it is plausible that the leadership's negative influence on the PO was the main culprit behind the eventual termination of Radio Selam. This is particularly the case as external sponsor National Endowment for Democracy (NED) cited the departure of key staff and problems with the grant reporting procedure, the responsibility of the Education Section head who was also the president's wife, as the factors causing it to terminate funding even though it had planned to continue supporting the project for four more years. As former advisor Gilchrest so presciently had said; what would be the reason for NED to continue if the leadership did not do something with the lack of backup for Radio Selam on the part of the PO?

Organizational challenges seemed less pronounced at YDCS, except for wages and equipment, issues that are summarised when looking at the economic sphere. Apart from this YDCS seemed to function quite well, although there was some mild acrimony between the producers and production technician on the one hand and the YDCS leadership on the other over, again, wages and equipment, indicating that internal communication flows could at least be improved in order to reduce frustrations and help find solutions (the producers and production technician felt there was a lack of understanding of the demands of their work, and the radio head felt that these were coming with unrealistic demands).

EECMY's historical and geographical links to the Oromo community, the fact that a majority of its members are Oromo, the fact that it is a church and that the PO focuses its attention on church areas, and the fact that most of YD (Yemisirach Dimts) Radio's listeners are said to be in these same areas, might have limited the number of non-

Oromo and non-evangelical listeners to Radio Selam depending on whether or not they felt that the programming was trustworthy and relevant, despite the rather general target group for Radio Selam noted in the NED grant (all Ethiopians in conflict areas) and the producers attempts to discuss Ethiopian conflicts in general.

### **5.2.1 Conclusion: Organizational constraints**

I argue that it is plausible that despite the many challenges to Radio Selam from my four spheres of influence, ironically the church leadership seems to have been the biggest of these, even causing the project to founder by advertently or inadvertently promoting a counterproductive staffing situation.

Important issues linked to the leadership include inappropriate staff appointments (including nepotism), behaviour directly or indirectly causing the departure of staff key to Radio Selam, leadership culpability in conflicts and avoidance of engagement with Radio Selam, church sectarianism (ethnic, political, family, ally and enemy), micromanagement and a burdensome bureaucracy.

General challenges in the PO included staff with insufficient motivation and educational backgrounds, dysfunctional routines, and the lack of office space, equipment and furniture – which are issues linked to leadership priorities and funding.

At YDCS the internal communication environment could be somewhat improved in order to reduce frustrations and misunderstandings, even if grievances can not always be addressed fully due to such issues as resource limitations.

## **5.3 Individual sphere**

I came across plausible constraining influences linked to individuals closely involved with the project. These constraints were related to the educational and skill levels of the individuals, which in turn were related to employment and internal educational policies as well as individual initiative and backgrounds.



No-one in the PO had any communication or media training, including peace media training, even though their responsibilities included initialising the project, writing up themes for Radio Selam's programme schedule, and providing conflict resolution expertise for the producers and programmes. This led to some frustration among the producers, who felt that the people in the PO did not understand the challenges and appropriate approaches to radio. It also limited the number of feasible programming formats (specifically, the planners in the PO did not want to produce peace-promotional drama series, common in a number of peace radio projects, until they had become more familiar with the simpler formats). Furthermore, lack of experience with development media, including peace media, might have contributed to former PO advisor Gilchrest's decision not to convene focus groups to guide programming, given that he believed that listener letters might suffice.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the departure from the PO of the initiators of the Radio Selam project meant that the most skilled and motivated employees were gone, and a vacuum was created where the producers at YDCS felt somewhat abandoned and frustrated with the performance of the PO's Education Section head, who was the official PO-YDCS contact. Former advisor Gilchrest also said that the Education Section was not really following up the project. As noted previously the departure of key staff from the PO had been compounded by the calibre of those remaining. The Education Section head was allegedly employed due to nepotism and was said to lack the necessary skills and knowledge (and we saw that she did not have a strong conflict resolution background), while the coordinator, also allegedly lacking the right skills and motivations, was said to have been employed merely because he was a part of the president's grouping of internal allies. As we saw it seems plausible that these problems eventually led NED to terminate the funding that Radio Selam depended on for its survival. Furthermore, it seems likely that it affected the producers' access to expertise on peace and conflict

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<sup>22</sup> The cost of research and the desire not to delay the project any further might also have played a role here – see the economic sphere below.

issues, even if there was still some external support from the former coordinator of the PO, while the producers made efforts to self-educate themselves.

The producers who, subject to conforming with the PO-created programme schedule, had a great deal of freedom as they wrote up scripts, conducted interviews, moderated discussions, and recorded and edited individual shows, did not have any formal training in journalism or communication, much less in peace media. Wakshuma had completed a Bachelor degree in History while working at YD Radio, and Solomon had been a public school teacher in the 1950s and 1960s, but none had any formal training or education directly relevant for their radio work beyond one-week production and script writing workshops. This lack of training or education was true for all producers working on YD Radio, and programming would as a result suffer both stylistically and qualitatively according to Tamrat (2008). While I did not conduct a content analysis of Radio Selam programming, the above reminds us that lack of communication or journalism training and education is one possible source of weakness in projects such as these, as is the lack of specific training in peace media work.

I wondered if the ethnic identities of particularly the producers might have caused problems with Radio Selam's programming given the history of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. Producers Wakshuma and Solomon identified themselves as Oromo and Amhara respectively. As noted I did not discuss this issue directly with either given its sensitivity, and Solomon did not comment on ethnic issues beyond noting that he wanted to reach all peoples with the broadcasting. Similarly, while it was clear that Wakshuma felt passionately about Oromo welfare, he said that he felt strongly that he and his Radio Selam programming should not take sides, should focus on rational discussions, and promote understanding and cooperation between ethnic groups, religions and Ethiopians at large. While I feel it is probable that they both identify at least somewhat with their own ethnic groups, and possibly have more knowledge of the issues facing those particular ethnic groups, I did not uncover any evidence that they promoted their own ethnic groups while criticising other groups, or that they used ethnicity in any other negative way.

### **5.3.1 Conclusion: Individual constraints**

I feel it is plausible that the biggest threat to Radio Selam that emanated from the individual sphere was related to a lack of appropriate training, education and, in some cases, motivation among those working on the project. This was partly linked to nepotism and sectarian favours, and partly to the types of staff the church had managed to attract for whatever reason (such as funding, employment policies or planning).

The initiators of the project in the PO had conflict resolution expertise, but had did not have any experience whatsoever with journalism, communication or peace media (except for former coordinator Dr. Mulletta, who had spoken about such issues on YD Radio a few times). When they left, those remaining in the office even mostly lacked conflict resolution expertise, and did not have the capacity or motivation to follow up Radio Selam, eventually leading to the project's termination as the PO's obligations towards the external sponsor were not honoured. The producers at YDCS also were not educated in journalism, communication or peace media, and thus produced Radio Selam programmes by relying on self-education and some informal training (particularly by Dr. Mulletta).

## **5.4 Economic sphere**

Economic sphere constraints seemed to be related to a lack of funds and resources in church as a whole, the PO and YDCS, and the reliance on external funding.

The PO's employees were demotivated by low wages and were hampered by a lack of office space, equipment and even furniture, a situation which hindered "even the most basic of daily activities" (PO Strategic Plan, 2007: 11). This situation clearly does not help a project such as Radio Selam, and we have already seen how the situation in the PO seems to have forced NED to terminate funding. However, while the levels of funding available to the church most probably have a hand in the resource problems

facing the PO (and YDCS), it is not clear that the funding flows into the church are the only culprit. As we have seen the church leadership seems to have had its apprehensions about the PO's work, procedures for fund release were very slow, and NED's funds for production and administration seemed to be swallowed up exclusively by the latter, or by some other source not related to production, as the producers and production technician at YDCS did not receive wages from this source. Thus it may be that some of the resource problems relate to priorities and routines internally in the church.

As with the workers in the PO, the producers at YDCS were also demotivated by low wages and limited resources. Although NED's funding was meant to cover both production and administrative expenses, as just noted it all seemed to be absorbed by the administration category. YD Radio received other external funding (from Norea Mediemisjon in Norway), and this seemed to be the source of wages for the producers and production technician. The producers felt that their wages, less than USD5 per programme, were far too low. This was compounded by the fact that they did not receive telephone and overtime compensation, while the landline telephones at YDCS could only be used for outgoing calls during standard working hours. Meanwhile, the production technician wished for better microphones, a table for interviewees and CD-players. The radio head countered that YDCS could not afford these things, and that only the PO could give more money to the producers.

NED's influence on the project was obviously highly central in that Radio Selam would not have been possible without external support, and the project collapsed when NED withdrew funding. In addition NED earmarked various portions of the support for specific activities, limiting flexibility, and had a number of reporting requirements, increasing the bureaucratic load. It also prevented EECMY from proselytizing on Radio Selam, while NED's representative Bruton expressed a desire that the programme should evolve to cover more risky human rights issues at some point (although not making this a precondition). Both were cases of direct external interference with programming, even if not necessarily of a kind detrimental to the

actual quality of the programming (proselytization might for instance not be a good idea on a radio programme attempting to promote peace across religious divides). Also, the PO's desire to avoid aggravating NED by not delaying the project contributed to the decision to drop programme focus groups that could have aided programming. We saw that the cost of conducting such research may also have played a role.<sup>23</sup>

As we saw, the continuity of external funding could not be guaranteed. Most obviously, the immediate reason for the termination of the Radio Selam project was that NED withdrew its funding for production, administration and broadcasting even though it had planned to support the project for five years. Of course, the initial grant was only for one year and NED stuck to that, while one could say that NED's decision not to renew support should not have come as a big surprise given the PO's staff issues and failure to honour the grant commitments. Nevertheless, external control of funding can clearly lead both to reduced project predictability and reduced project survival or continuity. In another example, we saw that former PO advisor Gilchrest said that the PO's main sponsors (Norwegian Church Aid and Lutheran World Federation) were becoming increasingly frustrated with the PO's performance, and might shift their support to other organizations. Furthermore, following the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the external sponsors also reduced their funding, and it had been reduced further due to a drop in donations to Western church organisations by their dwindling membership bases. This demonstrated that pressures on the external funders themselves could also affect the incoming money and resource flows to the church.

EECMY did not appear likely to reach its goal of self-sufficiency in at least the near-to medium term. Despite the chronic shortages of funds and equipment and the problems with the external sponsors, the PO had developed a dependency syndrome that resulted in a lack of efforts to develop sustainable support such as volunteers or

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<sup>23</sup> And as we saw above, former PO advisor Gilchrest's lack of experience with development media might also have influenced this decision.

interns. And while EECMY was attempting to develop sources of revenue such as bookstores and grassroots donations, Ethiopia's crushing poverty meant that achieving self-sufficiency in this way would take a very long time.

Furthermore, Radio Selam was not funded by advertising – perhaps due to a dependency syndrome and lack of initiative, or as it would not make economic sense or be technically possible given YD Radio's reliance on an external broadcaster that charged for broadcasting and had a limited number of available programming slots, or for another reason. There were also no government subsidies, although this did not seem to be the fault of the church.

#### **5.4.1 Conclusion: Economic constraints**

It seems plausible that economic sphere constraints related to a lack of funds and resources in church as a whole, the PO and YDCS, and the reliance on external funding.

Important issues included the level of funding from the external sponsors and its impact on issues such as wage levels and equipment, the operational limitations of the reliance on external sponsors with their own demands as regards both the use of funds and programming content, the priorities and routines for utilizing the funds in the organization, the unpredictable nature of external funding as regards continuity (particularly given that NED terminated its support after only one year), the difficulty in securing more sustainable sources of funding such as internal funding, and the absence of advertising and government support.

### **5.5 Political sphere**

Political sphere constraints seem to have related to the government's often negative treatment of the church as a whole, and in particular of its peace work and media efforts. There also seemed to be some pressure coming from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

During Dergue rule, and in the wake of the rise of OLF and Oromo nationalism, EECMY's Oromo connection caused a very hostile reaction from the government, which harassed, jailed, tortured or killed members and closed down hundreds of churches despite the fact that there has never surfaced evidence of any systematic or high level collaboration between the church and OLF, and I believe that this experience may have bred a culture of caution in EECMY. EECMY's status as a religious denomination also seems to have been offensive to the Stalinist junta. Relations improved after Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power, but the government was still a source of many constraints on the church as a whole, including by using laws and policies that hindered its operations (such as the new NGO requirements and by only granting visas to Lutheran missionaries if they engaged in development work). These sorts of interventions makes EECMY's operating environment more difficult, which probably has a knock-on effect on the organizational efficiency and general internal operations of the church and its projects, including Radio Selam.

The church's standing in society seemed to play a role in the government's attitude to it. The church was allegedly treated worse than denominations that had a longer history in Ethiopia, and particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is not clear why this should be so, but I speculate that the government, with its Marxist background, is not particularly enamoured of religious organisations to begin with, and probably finds it easier to oppose denominations which do not have as firm a foothold as the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, EECMY has close connections with Western churches, religious NGOs and other organisations, and their focus on social activism in addition to aid and development work, combined with EECMY's own focus on a "holistic ministry" and conflict resolution efforts, might mean that the church is seen as a bigger threat in the eyes of the government. Given the government's attitude to freedom of speech, particularly when dealing with highly sensitive subjects such as conflict, NED was even surprised that Radio Selam had lasted for as long as it had after only a few months of operation.

The church's Oromo links seemed to complicate matters further. EECMY is a church with deep roots in the Oromo "ethnic" community, and with Oromos as its largest group of followers, although as other ethnicities are also represented it would be wrong to simply label it an "Oromo church". Nevertheless, the status of the Oromo community as the largest "ethnic" group in Ethiopia, and the rise of Oromo nationalism and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), has strained relations between EECMY and the government despite the fact that there is no evidence of any systematic or high-level collaboration between the church and OLF. The church and Radio Selam thus presumably ran a heightened risk of being accused of supporting OLF. My interviewees were keenly aware of the tribulations the church had faced under the Dergue, and although times have improved, EPRDF does view OLF as one of its biggest enemies, and frequently engages in jailings, torture and other harassment of suspects. As we saw the president was even unseated in 2009 after dabbling in a mediation effort between EPRDF and OLF, and Radio Selam producer Wakshuma had been pressured by government operative due to, among other things, his focus on the rights of the Oromo community on an earlier programme on YD Radio and during his university history lectures. Clearly, the church's Oromo ties places it in a delicate position.

The church's political engagement by ways of the PO is clearly of concern to EPRDF, and it apparently engaged both in spying and sabotage, and in giving actual instructions. Members of the Peace Commission, including EECMY's president, would sometimes hold meetings on particularly sensitive topics with the government, which would tell them what they could and could not focus on. The president of EECMY walked a fine line as he tried to avoid aggravating the government while remaining independent of it. Some in the church were also said to be allied with the government, although it was speculated that these were few (they nevertheless apparently managed to unseat the president). In general, those in the PO and YDCS were also aware of the sort of general topics that could and could not be worked on, and engaged in self-censorship where their work risked angering the government.



Sometimes, such as when the PO's field findings indicated that local government officials had whipped up a conflict with divide-and-rule tactics, the government would even prevent the PO from presenting a report to its external sponsors. The government was also said to have sent an undercover operative into the PO to spy and destroy material on at least one occasion.

As we saw above, church allies of the government allegedly pressured the EECMY president out. Government pressure also led to resignations of people more closely involved with Radio Selam. The assistant coordinator (Merga) went into exile in Europe in 2007 because of government pressure due to his field reports, and the former coordinator (Dr. Mulletta) had left in 2003 due to the church leaders' nervousness over his politically sensitive work.

I did not uncover any evidence that particular Radio Selam programmes had been censored or otherwise been directly interfered with – possibly because the programme had not been on the air for very long and because the producers had focused on peace education instead of human rights monitoring and “straight news” – and so the greatest direct impact on Radio Selam programming was pressure leading to self-censorship. Everyone involved with the Radio Selam project was well aware of the government's treatment of journalists and organisations that covered conflict issues in a way that the government could see as threatening. Furthermore, as noted the PC would have meetings with the government from time to time where they could receive warnings about what not to delve into, and were in no illusions about what they could and could not speak publicly about. Brunowyn Bruton of NED was also well aware of the political situation in Ethiopia, and for this reason did not go far in pressuring Radio Selam to focus more on human rights reporting, which she hoped but doubted that it would be able to do.

While the producers had a great deal of freedom when it came to programming (as long as they followed the PO's programme schedule), YDCS' radio head would check all Radio Selam programmes before they were broadcast in order to ensure that they

did not contain anything too politically risky. However, he did not censor any of programmes produced up until I left Ethiopia (a little over three months' worth). Members of the PO's Peace Commission had asked producer Wakshuma to avoid politics altogether, but he had not gone along with this as he felt that he could accomplish a lot with peace education and panel discussions without damaging the church with more direct forms of reporting.

Producer Wakshuma kept all Radio Selam recordings so that he would be able to defend himself against accusations of anti-government programming in the future. He also said that he had received threats from OLF due to some of his previous radio work, and on Radio Selam he was as careful not to aggravate the rebel group as EPRDF. Solomon did not speak of being contacted by any operatives, but the veteran producer, who had worked with YD Radio during three Ethiopian regimes, was clearly anxious to avoid the topic of politics, and particularly current politics, as far as possible while being interviewed.

The government had not returned the broadcasting antenna EECMY used until the Dergue nationalised Radio Voice of the Gospel, and banned religious organizations from broadcasting from Ethiopia. As a result YDCS had to send its Radio Selam programmes to South Africa to be broadcast by Trans World Radio (TWR). This meant that YDCS had to engage in project-delaying negotiations with TRW over allocations of finite programming slots, and was forced to settle for 30 minutes of Radio Selam programming in each language per week even though they had wished for an hour (assuming they could have afforded this). They also had to send all programmes two or three months in advance, while the government rejected the church's application to be allowed to install a satellite transmitter to transfer programmes more quickly. This was another hindrance to providing fresh news, and made it impossible to include live phone-in programmes. The signal was also worse at least in Addis Ababa than it would have been if the church had used a local antenna. In addition, Radio Selam's planners in the PO had not conducted a pre-programme survey to help tailor programming for local needs and sensibilities as project

implementation had already been so delayed by negotiations with TWR that they were afraid to aggravate NED with further postponements.

Furthermore, the government does not provide the church or Radio Selam with any subsidies, even though the anonymous interviewee believed that it would have done so if EECMY became its instrument.

#### **5.5.1 Conclusion: Political constraints**

It seems plausible that political sphere constraints related the government's often negative treatment of the church as a whole, and in particular of its peace work and media efforts, and to the church's position in society as a religious denomination with ties to the Oromo community.

Important issues included the government's view of religious denominations and in particular a relatively new and socio-politically active church linked to the Oromo community, repressive or overly interfering government laws and policies including a ban on religious broadcasting (leading to a number of constraints), government pressure leading to self-censorship, government pressure such as giving directions and engaging in spying and sabotage, government pressure leading to the departure of staff, a lack of government subsidies, the level of government involvement in conflicts (such as by divide-and-rule), and OLF-pressure on programming leading to self-censorship.

### **5.6 Overall conclusion**

I argue that the biggest constraints from the organizational sphere are plausibly linked to the quality, motivations and actions of the leadership. The biggest constraints from the individual sphere are plausibly linked to the quality of training, education and motivation among staff. The biggest constraints from the economic sphere are plausibly linked to the level of funding and the reliance on external funding. The biggest political constraints are plausibly linked to the government's treatment of the

church and its conflict resolution and media efforts, which in turn are linked to the church's activities and position in society.

It is more difficult to estimate relative causal weights or necessary or sufficient variables. The spheres interacted at different points, and so while a sphere could plausibly be an independent variable in one instance, it could be an intervening variable in another. It has also not been possible for me to adequately investigate all sections of the different causal narratives.

For instance, were the unqualified people in the PO an individual sphere influence on the project, or an organizational sphere influence (given that church leaders employed them), or was the individual sphere an intervening variable and the organizational sphere an independent variable in this case? Was the disorganization and inefficiency in the PO a result of the organizational or individual sphere, or perhaps a lack of resources stemming from the economic sphere? Or of political interference leading to organizational interruptions and demotivated staff, or to timid leaders that neglected the office? Was the lack of focus groups the result of government pressures leading to a reliance on the South African broadcaster which delayed the project, or was it the result of pressures from the economic sphere (specifically a lack of funding or a fear that further delays would aggravate NED), or was it the result of a lack of experience with peace radio on the part of Gilchrest, or a combination of all these factors? Finally, the project's external sponsor was the most proximate cause of its demise, as it was NED that withdrew the funding that was keeping Radio Selam alive. However, it was the departure of key PO staff and the inadequacies of remaining staff that apparently led the sponsor to make this decision. The departure of the key staff and the retention of the other staff was in turn related to organizational pressures such as leadership-directed nepotism and scepticism towards conflict resolution work, and political pressures either directly (on Merga) or indirectly (on Dr. Mulletta via nervous church leaders), or potentially (on Gilchrest through unresponsive and perhaps nervous, or simply unmotivated, leaders and colleagues), and economic pressures due to inadequate wages, equipment and furniture.

I content myself with concluding that each sphere plausibly favoured the different outcomes.

## 5.7 Positive aspects

Although the interviewees and literature highlighted many constraints and painted quite a critical picture of some of the actors involved with the project, there were also a number of positive features that deserve a mention.

Most obviously, EEECMY was able to run a peace radio project in a country where the media is tightly controlled and the theme of conflict highly sensitive, where there are no private TV-stations and private radio was permitted only recently, and where there is even a specific law banning religious organisations from running radio stations. Furthermore, Bruton, Radio Selam's contact person at NED, having faced great trouble in trying to find *any* media projects to support in Ethiopia, was very enthusiastic about the opportunity Radio Selam presented, and was surprised that it had survived for so long after only a few months given the country's political situation. The existence of Radio Selam was such a rare opportunity that Bruton even said that it would be "crazy" not to resume support sometime in the future.

How did it survive and avoid direct censorship, and why did the government not prevent EECMY from sending Radio Selam programmes to South Africa? As was noted in the introductory chapter on religious peace media, religious NGOs may have some advantages in peacemaking due, among other things, to their long-term presence and that they are the "largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world", with deep support from the grassroots to the national and international levels (Johnston, 2005: 14). It is my belief that this may go some way to explaining Tronvoll's assertion that "*apart from the religious organisations*, most of the elements of civil society in Ethiopia seem either weak, co-opted by the state or non-existent" (my emphasis) (1997: 19). It may be that the government is loath to go too far in attacking a deeply

entrenched religious organisation with many members. It may also be that YD Radio, which had its roots in the 1960s, had gained the trust of the government somewhat, opening up the possibility of stretching the boundaries with Radio Selam. YD Radio focused on spiritual and social issues, but the social issues were generally less sensitive than those covered by Radio Selam. The fact that Radio Selam was one of the programmes on YD Radio might have put the government somewhat at ease (although this is of course pure speculation).

It was also clear that the church's relations with EPRDF were better than with the Dergue (although possibly not better than with Haile Selassie), and the relative openness of the current government compared to the extremely repressive Dergue made the countenance of a project such as Radio Selam possible in the first place. While it tightly controlled civil society, including the media and NGOs, the government did not stifle it completely.

EECMY was "lucky" in that EPRDF gave it back buildings and studios that were a remnant of the glory days of Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG). With LWF also donating some of the compensation it received from EPRDF for the Dergue's nationalisation of RVOG, EECMY had less fixed costs and was, given Ethiopian realities, relatively well placed for such a radio project.

EECMY's reliance on external funding also had its positive sides. The most obvious was that the absence of this support would have bankrupted the church – particularly given that the prospects of attaining self-sufficiency were dim in at least the near- to medium-term. In addition, the church had long-term religious sponsors. Even though support had decreased in recent years and funding was never guaranteed, sponsors such as Norea Mediemisjon, the media missionary organisation that supported YDCS and effectively paid the Radio Selam producers' and production technician's wages, had often stuck with the church for decades and were probably encouraged to do so by issues such as religious aspirations, the destitution of many Ethiopians, EECMY's

impressive growth, the lure of Ethiopia's huge numbers of potential converts to Protestantism, and habit and familiarity.

NED was not a religious sponsor, and in fact was not allowed to support proselytization. However, in NED the church found an organization that was eager to help, and that had a clear framework for progress. Its support had preconditions, such as reporting requirements and the earmarking of funds. While limiting in one way, such demands could also help to focus minds in the church, PO and YDCS, encouraging an efficient and structured approach to the project. In the end this does not seem to have happened at least to the necessary extent as NED cancelled funding because of weaknesses with staffing and the grant reporting procedure, but with the right staff in the PO I believe it could have.

The church leadership, while not perfect, did allow the project to go ahead and provided it with some support. The main planners of the project in the PO (the former advisor, former coordinator and former assistant coordinator) were motivated, had conflict resolution expertise, were familiar with the Ethiopian context, managed to secure funding, and had a good rapport with the producers.

The producers were also motivated, had years of experience with radio work, including some social programming, and did their best to use available resources to equip themselves with some conflict resolution knowledge. Wakshuma had written dramas for television and acted on stage, and so with some further training he could perhaps even have become Radio Selam's writer of peace building dramas?

The producers showed creativity in the programming, using the programming schedule as a starting point for developing shows that brought up important issues related to peace and conflict without aggravating the government. By primarily focusing on peace education and panel discussions, the producers were able to raise relatively sensitive issues without engaging in "straight news" or aggressive human rights reporting. While not perfect, the programming was able to go further than expected,

particularly given that Radio Selam was a radio station, with potentially large audiences and impacts. Indeed, one advantage of development radio programming is that there are many viable alternatives to straight news and other very direct approaches. Often peace education (including Entertainment-Education), panel discussions, vox pops and other creative ways of examining conflicts can provide very useful alternatives, even if the freedom to also report more directly would clearly be an advantage.

Furthermore, I uncovered no evidence that the producers or other people involved with the project were damaging programming with racism or the like despite the tense “ethnic” landscape in Ethiopia. While it was clear that Oromo producer Wakshuma felt passionately about Oromo welfare, he also said that he felt strongly that his Radio Selam programming should not take sides, should focus on rational discussions, and should promote understanding and cooperation between ethnic groups, religions and Ethiopians at large. Amhara producer Solomon highlighted the need to focus on all sides, to give all a voice, and to reach out to all. This is important, as it was clear that the producers had a great deal of freedom when it came to programming.

I believe that with better internal communication and cooperation EECMY’s wide network of synods as well as departments such as the PO and the church’s long-running development division, could be a real asset for a project such as Radio Selam. EECMY’s many grassroots members meant that the producers already had many potential sources of information regarding goings on in the country. Furthermore, the PO’s planned for focal persons in the field could potentially have cooperated on projects that would link Radio Selam programming to physical projects in areas facing conflict, potentially strengthening impact. If the cooperation could extend to the development department, and possibly even the mission department and other areas, even more possibilities open up. The PO already provided YDCS with valuable expertise (at least until the departure of the project initiators).



In addition, the fact that EECMY is a religious denomination meant that the project was religiously “credible” and well placed to appeal to the positive aspects of people’s identities with the right approach. We saw that Radio Selam’s programming was geared towards finding religious commonalities and areas of potential understanding and cooperation (and producer Wakshuma even noted that he avoided the word “Jesus” in favour of “God” in order to appeal to Muslims and others).

## **5.8 Generalizing**

I feel that I have demonstrated that it is plausible that all four spheres of influence served to constrain Radio Selam in different ways. However, are there lessons to be had for other peace radio projects? Have concerns been raised that should be kept in mind by other planners?

Although caution should be taken in assuming that my findings can be generalized, particularly as this is a plausibility probe, and as I have not conducted any comparative research beyond my review of reports on constraints on other African peace radio projects, I believe that there are grounds for considering the value of my findings for other projects. Issues such as the historical, cultural, political and economic peculiarities of Ethiopia, the specific history of the RO in relation to the state, and the RO’s own internal peculiarities, limit the degree of generalisation to other peace radio projects in other countries or even Ethiopia. However, if we for instance limit ourselves to sub-Saharan Africa we see that there are many countries with repressive governments, ethnic strife, impoverished populations and organisations dependent on external funding, and so on. Similarly, the BBC World Service Trust, while allowing for domestic peculiarities, takes sub-Saharan Africa as its analytical unit in a series of media reports, as does a recent report on democratic freedoms by Freedom House (AMDI Summary Report, 2006; FH, 2009). Furthermore, we see that the constraints I have detailed have much in common with many of the constraints on African peace radio projects I described in the theory chapter.

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## **Acronyms**

CRS – Catholic Relief Services  
DFID – Department for International Development  
DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo  
EC – Executive Committee  
EECMY - Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus  
EOC – Ethiopian Orthodox Church  
EMD – Electronic Media Division  
EPLF – Eritrean People’s Liberation Front  
EPRDF – Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front  
IDMC – Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
LWF – Lutheran World Federation  
NCA – Norwegian Church Aid  
NED – National Endowment for Democracy  
NGO – Non-governmental organisation  
OLF – Oromo Liberation Front  
PC – Peace Commission  
PO – Peace Office  
RO – Religious organisation  
RVOG – Radio Voice of the Gospel  
TPLF – Tigray People’s Liberation Front  
TWR – Trans World Radio  
UN – United Nations  
YDCS - Yemisirach Dimts Communication Services